THE DORRANCE DOMAIN

by

Carolyn Wells

THE DORRANCE DOMAIN

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"IF THAT'S THE DORRANCE DOMAIN, IT'S ALL RIGHT. WHAT DO YOU THINK, FAIRY?"

The Dorrance Domain

Frontispiece (Page 65)

THE DORRANCE DOMAIN

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GROSSET & DUNLAP

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The Dorrance Domain.

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The Dorrance Domain

CHAPTER I

COOPED UP

"I *WISH* we didn't have to live in a boarding-house!" said Dorothy Dorrance, flinging herself into an armchair, in her grandmother's room, one May afternoon, about six o'clock.

She made this remark almost every afternoon, about six o'clock, whatever the month or the season, and as a rule, little attention was paid to it. But to-day her sister Lilian responded, in a sympathetic voice,

"*I* wish we didn't have to live in a boarding-house!"

Whereupon Leicester, Lilian's twin brother, mimicking his sister's tones, dolefully repeated, "I wish *we* didn't have to live in a boarding-house!"

And then Fairy, the youngest Dorrance, and the last of the quartet, sighed forlornly, "I wish we didn't have to live in a *boarding-house!*"

There was another occupant of the room. A gentle white-haired old lady, whose sweet face and dainty fragile figure had all the effects of an ivory miniature, or a painting on porcelain.

"My dears," she said, "I'm sure I wish you didn't."

"Don't look like that, grannymother," cried Dorothy, springing to kiss the troubled face of the dear old lady. "I'd live here a million years, rather than have you look so worried about it. And anyway, it wouldn't be so bad, if it weren't for the dinners."

"I don't mind the dinners," said Leicester, "in fact I would be rather sorry not to have them. What I mind is the cramped space, and the shut-up-in-your-own-room feeling. I spoke a piece in school last week, and I spoke it awful well, too, because I just meant it. It began, 'I want free life, and I want fresh air,' and that's exactly what I do want. I

wish we lived in Texas, instead of on Manhattan Island. Texas has a great deal more room to the square yard, and I don't believe people are crowded down there."

"There can't be more room to a square yard in one place than another," said Lilian, who was practical.

"I mean back yards and front yards and side yards,—and I don't care whether they're square or not," went on Leicester, warming to his subject. "My air-castle is situated right in the middle of the state of Texas, and it's the only house in the state."

"Mine is in the middle of a desert island," said Lilian; "it's so much nicer to feel sure that you can get to the water, no matter in what direction you walk away from your house."

"A desert island would be nice," said Leicester; "it would be more exciting than Texas, I suppose, on account of the wild animals. But then in Texas, there are wild men and wild animals both."

"I like plenty of room, too," said Dorothy, "but I want it inside my house as well as

out. Since we are choosing, I think I'll choose to live in the Madison Square Garden, and I'll have it moved to the middle of a western prairie."

"Well, children," said Mrs. Dorrance, "your ideas are certainly big enough, but you must leave the discussion of them now, and go to your small cramped boarding-house bedrooms, and make yourselves presentable to go down to your dinner in a boarding-house dining-room."

This suggestion was carried out in the various ways that were characteristic of the Dorrance children.

Dorothy, who was sixteen, rose from her chair and humming a waltz tune, danced slowly and gracefully across the room. The twins, Lilian and Leicester, fell off of the arms of the sofa, where they had been perched, scrambled up again, executed a sort of war-dance and then dashed madly out of the door and down the hall.

Fairy, the twelve year old, who lived up to her name in all respects, flew around the room, waving her arms, and singing in a high

soprano, "Can I wear my pink sash? Can I wear my pink sash?"

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Dorrance, "you may wear anything you like, if you'll only keep still a minute. You children are too boisterous for a boarding-house. You *ought* to be in the middle of a desert or somewhere. You bewilder me!"

But about fifteen minutes later it was four decorous young Dorrances who accompanied their grandmother to the dining-room. Not that they wanted to be sedate, or enjoyed being quiet, but they were well-bred children in spite of their rollicking temperaments. They knew perfectly well how to behave properly, and always did it when the occasion demanded.

And, too, the atmosphere of Mrs. Cooper's dining-room was an assistance rather than a bar to the repression of hilarity.

The Dorrances sat at a long table, two of the children on either side of their grandmother, and this arrangement was one of their chief grievances.

"If we could only have a table to our-

selves," Leicester often said, "it wouldn't be so bad. But set up side by side, like the teeth in a comb, cheerful conversation is impossible."

"But, my boy," his grandmother would remonstrate, "you must learn to converse pleasantly with those who sit opposite you. You can talk with your sisters at other times."

So Leicester tried, but it is exceedingly difficult for a fourteen year old boy to adapt himself to the requirements of polite conversation.

On the evening of which we are speaking, his efforts, though well meant, were unusually unsuccessful.

Exactly opposite Leicester sat Mr. Bannister, a ponderous gentleman, both physically and mentally. He was a bachelor, and his only idea regarding children was that they should be treated jocosely. He also had his own ideas of jocose treatment.

"Well, my little man," he said, smiling broadly at Leicester, "did you go to school to-day?"

As he asked this question every night at

dinner, not even excepting Saturdays and Sundays, Leicester felt justified in answering only, "Yes, sir."

"That's nice; and what did you learn?"

As this question invariably followed the other, Leicester was not wholly unprepared for it. But the discussion of air-castles in Texas, or on a prairie, had made the boy a little impatient of the narrow dining-room, and the narrow table, and even of Mr. Bannister, though he was by no means of narrow build.

"I learned my lessons," he replied shortly, though there was no rudeness in his tone.

"Tut, tut, my little man," said Mr. Bannister, playfully shaking a fat finger at him, "don't be rude."

"No, sir, I won't," said Leicester, with such an innocent air of accepting a general bit of good advice, that Mr. Bannister was quite discomfited.

Grandma Dorrance looked at Leicester reproachfully, and Mrs. Hill, who was a sharp-featured, sharp-spoken old lady, and who also sat on the other side of the table, said

severely, to nobody in particular, "Children are not brought up now as they were in my day."

This had the effect of silencing Leicester, for the three older Dorrances had long ago decided that it was useless to try to talk to Mrs. Hill. Even if you tried your best to be nice and pleasant, she was sure to say something so irritating, that you just *had* to lose your temper.

But Fairy did not subscribe to this general decision. Indeed, Fairy's chief characteristic was her irrepressible loquacity. So much trouble had this made, that she had several times been forbidden to talk at the dinner-table at all. Then Grandma Dorrance would feel sorry for the dolefully mute little girl, and would lift the ban, restricting her, however, to not more than six speeches during any one meal.

Fairy kept strict account, and never exceeded the allotted number, but she made each speech as long as she possibly could, and rarely stopped until positively interrupted.

So she took it upon herself to respond to

Mrs. Hill's remark, and at the same time demonstrate her loyalty to her grandmother.

"I'm sure, Mrs. Hill," Fairy began, "that nobody could bring up children better than my grannymother. She is the best children bring-upper in the whole world. I don't know how your grandmother brought you up, —or perhaps you had a mother,—some people think they're better than grandmothers. I don't know; I never had a mother, only a grandmother, but she's just the best ever, and if us children aren't good, it's our fault and not hers. She says we're boist'rous, and I 'spect we are. Mr. Bannister says we're rude, and I 'spect we are; but none of these objectionaries is grandma's fault!" Fairy had a way of using long words when she became excited, and as she knew very few real ones she often made them up to suit herself. And all her words, long or short came out in such a torrent of enthusiasm and emphasis, and with such a degree of rapidity that it was a difficult matter to stop her. So on she went. "So it's all right, Mrs. Hill, but when we don't behave just first-rate, or just as children

did in your day, please keep a-remembering to blame us and not grandma. You see," and here Fairy's speech assumed a confidential tone, "we don't have room enough. We want free life and we want fresh air, and then I 'spect we'd be more decorious."

"That will do, Fairy," said Mrs. Dorrance, looking at her gravely.

"Yes'm," said Fairy, smiling pleasantly, "that'll do for one."

"And that makes two! now you've had two speeches, Fairy," said her brother, teasingly.

"I have not," said Fairy, "and an explanationary speech doesn't count!"

"Yes, it does," cried Lilian, "and that makes three!"

"It doesn't, does it, grandma?" pleaded Fairy, lifting her big blue eyes to her grandmother's face.

Mrs. Dorrance looked helpless and a little bewildered, but she only said, "Please be quiet, Fairy; I might like to talk a little, myself."

"Oh, that's all right, grandma dear," said

Fairy, placidly; "I know how it is to feel conversationary myself."

The children's mother had died when Fairy was born, and her father had given her the name of Fairfax because there had always been a Fairfax Dorrance in his family for many generations. To be sure it had always before been a boy baby who was christened Fairfax, but the only boy in this family had been named Leicester; and so, one Fairfax Dorrance was a girl. From the time she was old enough to show any characteristics at all, she had been fairy-like in every possible way. Golden hair, big blue eyes and a cherub face made her a perfect picture of child beauty. Then she was so light and airy, so quick of motion and speech, and so immaculately dainty in her dress and person, that Fairy seemed to be the only fitting name for her. No matter how much she played rollicking games, her frock never became rumpled or soiled; and the big white bow which crowned her mass of golden curls always kept its shape and position even though its wearer turned somersaults. For Fairy was by no means a

quiet or sedate child. None of the Dorrances were that. And the youngest was perhaps the most headstrong and difficult to control. But though impetuous in her deeds and misdeeds, her good impulses were equally sudden, and she was always ready to apologize or make amends for her frequent naughtiness.

And so after dinner, she went to Mrs. Hill, and said with a most engaging smile, "I'm sorry if I 'fended you, and I hope I didn't. You see I didn't mean to speak so much, and right at the dinner table, too, but I just *have* to stand up for my grannymother. She's so old, and so ladylike that she can't stand up for herself. And I was 'fraid you mightn't understand, so I thought I'd 'pologize. Is it all right?"

Fairy looked up into Mrs. Hill's face with such angelic eyes and pleading smile, that even that dignified lady unbent a little.

"Yes, my dear," she said; "it's all right for you to stand up for your grandmother, as you express it. But you certainly do talk too much for such a little girl."

"Yes'm," said Fairy, contritely, "I know I

do. It's my upsetting sin; but somehow I can't help it. My head seems to be full of words, and they just keep spilling out. Don't you ever talk too much, ma'am?"

"No; I don't think I do."

"You ought to very thankful," said Fairy, with a sigh; "it is an awful affliction. Why once upon a time ——"

"Come, Fairy," said Mrs. Dorrance; "say good-night to Mrs. Hill, and come up-stairs with me."

"Yes, grandma, I'm coming. Good-night, Mrs. Hill; I'm sorry I have to go just now 'cause I was just going to tell you an awful exciting story. But perhaps to-morrow ——"

"Come, Fairy," said Mrs. Dorrance; "come at once!" And at last the gentle old lady succeeded in capturing her refractory granddaughter, and led the dancing sprite away to her own room.

CHAPTER II

REBELLIOUS HEARTS

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Cooper's boarders were privileged to sit in the parlor in the evening, the Dorrances rarely availed themselves of this permission. For the atmosphere of the formal and over-punctilious drawing-room was even more depressing than that of the dining-room. And even had the children wanted to stay there, which they didn't, Mrs. Dorrance would have been afraid that their irrepressible gayety would have been too freely exhibited. And another thing, they had to study their next day's lessons, for their hours between school and dinner-time were always spent out of doors.

And so every evening they congregated in their grandmother's room, and were studious or frivolous as their mood dictated.

To-night they were especially fractious.

"Grannymother," exclaimed Lilian, "it

just seems as if I *couldn't* live in this house another minute! there is nobody here I like, except our own selves, and I just hate it all!"

"Did *you* go to school to-day, my little man?" said Leicester, shaking his finger in such funny imitation of Mr. Bannister, that Lilian had to laugh, in spite of her discontentment.

"I'm so tired of him, too," went on Lilian, still scowling. "Can't we go and live somewhere else, grandmother?"

Mrs. Dorrance sighed. She knew only too well the difficulty of securing desirable rooms in a desirable locality with her four lively young charges; and especially at the modest price she was able to pay. Already they had moved six times in their two years of boarding-house life, and Mrs. Dorrance dreaded the thought of a seventh similar experience.

"Lilian, dear," she said, gently, "you know how hard it is to find any nice boarding-house where they will take four noisy children. And I'm sure, in many respects, this is the best one we've ever found."

"I suppose it is," said Dorothy, looking up

from the French lesson she was studying, "but I know one thing! as soon as I get through school, and I don't mean to go many years more, we're going to get away from boarding-houses entirely, and we're going to have a home of our own. I don't suppose it can be in Texas, or the Desert of Sahara, but we'll have a house or an apartment or something, and live by ourselves."

"I wish you might do so," said her grandmother, "but I fear we cannot afford it. And, too, I think I would not be able to attend to the housekeeping. When we used to have plenty of servants, it was quite a different matter."

"But granny, dear," cried Dorothy, "I don't mean for you to housekeep. I mean to do that myself. After I get through school, you know, I'll have nothing to do, and I can just as well keep house as not."

"Do you know how?" asked Fairy, staring at her oldest sister with wide-open blue eyes.

"Can you make a cherry pie?" sang Leicester. "I don't believe you can, Dot; and I'll tell you a better plan than yours.

You wait until *I* get out of school, and then I'll go into some business, and earn enough money to buy a big house for all of us."

"Like the one in Fifty-eighth Street?" said Dorothy, softly.

The children always lowered their voices when they spoke of the house on Fifty-eighth Street. Two years ago, when their grandfather died, they had to move out of that beautiful home, and none of them, not even little Fairy, could yet speak of it in a casual way.

The children's father had died only a few years after their mother, and the four had been left without any provision other than that offered by their Grandfather Dorrance. He took them into his home on Fifty-eighth Street, and being a man of ample means, he brought them up in a generous, lavish way. The little Dorrances led a happy life, free from care or bothers of any sort, until when Dorothy was fourteen, Grandfather Dorrance died.

His wife knew nothing of his business affairs, and placidly supposed there was no

reason why she should not continue to live with the children, in the ways to which they had so long been accustomed.

But all too soon she learned that years of expensive living had made decided inroads upon Mr. Dorrance's fortune, and that for the future her means would be sadly limited.

Mrs. Dorrance was a frail old lady, entirely unused to responsibilities of any kind; her husband had always carefully shielded her from all troubles or annoyances, and now, aside from her deep grief at his death, she was forced suddenly to face her changed circumstances and the responsibility of her four grandchildren.

She was crushed and bewildered by the situation, and had it not been for the advice and kind assistance of her lawyer, Mr. Lloyd, she would not have known which way to turn.

Dorothy, too, though only fourteen years old, proved to be a staunch little helper. She was brave and plucky, and showed a courage and capability that astonished all who knew her.

After Mr. Dorrance's affairs were settled up, it was discovered that the family could not remain in the home. Although the house was free of incumbrance, yet there was no money with which to pay taxes, or to pay the household expenses, even if they lived on a more moderate scale. Only a few years before his death, Mr. Dorrance had invested a large sum of money in a summer hotel property. This had not turned out advantageously, and though Mrs. Dorrance could not understand all of the business details, she finally became aware that she had but a net income of two thousand dollars to support herself and her grandchildren.

Helpless and heart-broken as she was, she yet had a certain amount of indomitable pride, which though it might break, would never bend.

In her quiet, gentle way she accepted the situation, and endeavored to find a suitable boarding-place that would come within her means. The big house had been rented to strangers, as Mr. Lloyd considered that a better investment than selling it. The furni-

ture had been sold, except a few choice personal belongings which had been stored away against better days.

With a cheerful placidity, which was but the reaction of her utter helplessness, Mrs. Dorrance began her new life.

The children took the change more easily. Although they fretted and stormed more, yet that very fact gave a sort of outlet to their disappointment, and, too, their youth allowed them to adapt themselves more easily to the changed conditions.

And had it been possible for them to have a home of their own, they would perhaps have been as happy as in their grandfather's mansion.

But Mrs. Dorrance well knew her own limitations, and realized that at her age she could not take up the unaccustomed cares of housekeeping.

And so they boarded; and it was unsatisfactory to all concerned; principally because children do not agree with boarding-houses and *vice versa*.

"Well, there is one thing to look forward

to," said Dorothy, in her cheerful way; "it's the first of May now. In a month, school will be over for this term, and then we can go to the seashore or the country, and get away from Mrs. Cooper's for the summer, anyhow."

"Yes," exclaimed Lilian, "won't it be fun! I vote for the country this year. What do you say, Leicester?"

The twins, though possessing strong individual opinions, usually referred all questions to each other, though this by no means implied a change of mind on the part of either.

"Country's all right," said Leicester, "but I like mountains. Mountainous country, you know; I don't mean Pike's Peak or Mount Washington."

"I like the seashore," said Fairy. "'Course you needn't go there just 'cause I like it,—but I do think it's awful nice. There's the water you know, and the big waves come in all tumble-bumble,—oh, it's beautiful to see them! And if I could have a new bathing-suit trimmed with red braid like Gladys Miller's, I do think ——"

"Wait a minute, Fairy," said her grandmother; "you're doing your thinking too soon. I'm sorry, children, more sorry than I can tell you, but I don't see how we can go away this summer, to the mountains or seashore or anywhere else."

"Oh, grannymother!" cried Dorothy in dismay; "you don't mean we must stay in the city all summer!"

"I'm afraid so, my dear. I can't see any hope for anything else."

"But grandma, we went last year, and we stayed all summer, and we had a lovely time." This from Lilian, whose brown eyes were already filling with tears.

"In the city! all summer! well, I just guess *not!*" shouted Leicester. "I'm going off of Manhattan Island, if I have to go as a tramp."

"Tramping isn't so bad," said Lilian, brightening up: "we could carry our things in handkerchiefs slung on sticks over our shoulders."

"But grannymother couldn't tramp," said Fairy.

"The streets will be broad and the lanes will be narrow,
So we'll have to take grannymother in a wheelbarrow,"

chanted Dorothy. "But tell us truly, granny, dear, why can't we go away?"

Grandmother Dorrance looked sad, but her face wore that air of placid determination which the children had come to look upon as indicative of final and unalterable decision.

"This last winter," she said, "was much more expensive than the winter before. There was the doctor and the nurse, when Fairy was ill; we are paying a little more board here than we did at Mrs. Watson's; and then, somehow, your clothes seem to cost more every year. I don't know how it is, I'm sure," and the sweet old face assumed the worried look that always pained Dorothy's heart, "but somehow there isn't any money left for a summer trip."

"But grandma," said Leicester, with a great desire to be businesslike, "can't we find a place to board in the country, for just the same price as we pay here?"

"No, it always costs a little more per week at any summer place than in the city. And that is not all; there are the traveling expenses, and you'd all need new summer clothes, and there are many extra expenses, such as laundry work, and things that you children know nothing about."

Dorothy sat thinking. She had closed her French book and sat with her elbows on the table in front of her, and her chin in her hands. Dorothy Dorrance was a very pretty girl, although it had never occurred to her to think so. She had dark eyes like her father's, but had inherited her mother's blonde hair. Not golden, but a light golden-brown, which fell into soft shining curls which tossed about her temples, and escaped from the thick twist at the back of her head. She had a sunshiny smile, which was almost always visible, for Dorothy was light-hearted and of a merry nature. She was an all-round capable girl, and could turn her hand to almost anything she undertook. She had a capable mind too, and often astonished her grandmother by her intelligent grasp of business matters or finan-

cial problems. Indeed, Dorothy at sixteen had a far more practical knowledge of the ways and means of existence than Mrs. Dorrance at seventy.

"Grandmother," she said at last, after she had sat for some minutes staring straight ahead of her, and looking, as Leicester said, "almost as if she were really thinking." "Grandmother, I think we are old enough now,—at any rate I am,—to know something about our income. How much money do we have a year?"

"That's easily told, my child; since your grandfather's death we have very little. I own the house on Fifty-eighth Street, but from the rent of that I have to pay taxes and repairs. Of course Mr. Lloyd attends to all these matters, and his judgment is always right, but I can't help thinking there is very little profit in that house."

"Wouldn't it be better to sell that house, and invest the money in some other way?" said Dorothy, straightforwardly.

"Mr. Lloyd says not, dearie, and of course he knows. Then besides that, I own the large

hotel property which your grandfather bought a few years before he died. But as I cannot rent it, and cannot sell it, it is not only no source of income to me, but it is a great expense."

"Oh, 'Our Domain' up in the mountains," said Dorothy.

"Yes, 'Our Domain'; but I wish it were the Domain of somebody else," said her grandmother.

This hotel property had always been called "Our Domain," by the family and when Mr. Dorrance was alive, had been looked upon as a sort of a joke, but the present view of the situation did not seem at all humorous.

"Never mind," said Leicester, who was always hopeful, "I think it's very nice to own a Domain. It makes us seem like landed proprietors, and some day, who knows, it may prove valuable."

CHAPTER III

DOROTHY'S PLAN

ONE afternoon, about a week later, the children were again in their grandmother's room waiting for dinner-time.

To be exact, they weren't in the room, but were literally half in and half out. For Mrs. Dorrance's room had two front windows, and two children were hanging out of each, in a precarious and really dangerous way.

The twins, in one window, were vying with each other as to which could lean out farthest, without falling out; and in the other window Dorothy was leaning out as far as possible, and at the same time trying to keep a very excited Fairy from pitching headlong to the street.

The simple explanation of this acrobatic performance is, that they were looking for the postman. Not that they really thought he would come any sooner for their endangering

their lives, but each young Dorrance considered it of the highest importance to catch the first glimpse of him.

"Oh, dear, do you suppose the house is sold?" said Lilian, for the dozenth time.

"Hi!" screamed Dorothy; "there he is! we'll soon know now."

Dorothy having won the game, they all tumbled into the room again, and Leicester started down-stairs for the mail.

"Gently, my boy, gently," warned his grandmother. "Don't go down whooping like a wild Indian."

Leicester assumed a sudden air of decorum, and disappeared; while the girls clustered around their grandmother, all talking at once.

"What do you think, grandmother?" cried Dorothy, "guess,—which way do you guess?"

"I guess, no," said Mrs. Dorrance, who was used to guessing games.

"I guess, *yes*!" shouted Lilian; "of course it's sold! and we'll have lots of money and we'll go to Europe, and Africa, and Chicago, and everywhere!"

"And over to Brooklyn," chimed in Fairy; "I do want to go to Brooklyn, 'cause I've never been there and Gladys Miller says it's awful funny, and besides ——"

"A letter! here's a letter," cried Leicester, bouncing into the room; "open it, open it quick, granny dear!"

"I can't," said the old lady, helplessly; "you children make such a noise, I'm all bewildered. Open it, Dorothy, and read it aloud; and the rest of you, do try to keep still."

Eagerly, Dorothy tore open the letter, and began to read it:

MRS. ELIZABETH DORRANCE:

Dear Madam:—I had a final interview today with Mr. Ware. As you know, he had about concluded to buy your hotel, but he has been making inquiries concerning it, and has learned that it has not been occupied for several years. He fears that he cannot make it pay as a business venture, and has therefore definitely decided not to buy it.

I do not wish to discourage you, my dear madam, but it looks to me as if it would not be possible to sell the hotel this season, and

indeed, I doubt if you can ever dispose of it to your satisfaction. The next best course, in my opinion, would be for you to allow it to be sold at auction. This plan would enable you to pay the back taxes now due, and relieve you of further obligations of the same sort,—though I fear there would be little or no margin of profit for you in this arrangement.

However, should you think best to adopt this course, please advise me promptly, and I will take the necessary steps in the matter.

I am, my dear madam,
Respectfully yours,
Lewis H. Lloyd.

At the conclusion of this letter the four Dorrance children groaned in concert. Their concerted groan was an old-established affair, and by reason of much practice they had brought it to a high state of perfection. It began with a low wail which deepened and strengthened through several bass notes, and then slid up to high C with a wild, final shriek. It was most effective as an expression of utter exasperation, but Mrs. Dorrance, though accustomed to it, lived in a state of fear lest it might cause the landlady to request them to give up their rooms.

"Oh, dear," said Lilian, after the groan had subsided, "I felt sure that Ware man was going to take the old place. I think he's mean!"

"I think Mr. Lloyd is mean," broke in Dorothy. "I don't like him!"

"It isn't his fault, my dear," said her grandmother. "He has done all in his power to sell the place, but it seems to be unsalable, except at auction. And that would probably mean that our financial affairs would be in no better state than they are now."

"I'd like to see Our Domain," said Leicester, thoughtfully; "what's it like, grandmother?"

"I don't know, dear; I've never seen it. Your grandfather never saw it either. He bought the property through an agent, merely as a speculation."

"Ho!" cried Leicester, "the idea of owning a Domain that nobody has ever seen! why, perhaps there is nothing there at all, and so of course nobody will buy it."

"People!" exclaimed Dorothy, suddenly, her eyes shining, and her whole air expressive of a wonderful discovery. And, too,

when Dorothy said, "People!" in that tone of voice, the others had learned that she meant to announce one of her plans. As a rule, her plans were wild and impracticable schemes, but they were always interesting to listen to.

"People, I'll tell you exactly what we'll do. Grandma says we can't afford any extra expense this summer. So,—we'll go and live in our Domain!"

"Well, of all crazy things," said Lilian, in a disappointed tone. "I thought you were going to say something nice."

"It *is* nice," said Dorothy; "you think it isn't, because you don't know anything about it. I know all about it. Now listen and I'll tell you."

"Know all about it!" said Leicester; "you don't even know where it is!"

"Anybody can find that out," went on Dorothy; "and then when we find out, all we have to do is to go there. And then we'll live in the house, no matter what it is. It's ours, and so we won't have to pay any rent, and we girls will do all the housework and

cooking, and so it won't cost near as much as boarding. And the difference will pay our traveling expenses to the Domain, wherever it is. And we won't need any new clothes to go to a place like that, and it will be perfectly lovely, as good as a prairie or a Texas, or anything! Now then!"

"Whew!" exclaimed Leicester; "I do believe you've struck it right this time. It will be great! I'll do my share of the work,—it will be just like camping out. What do you suppose the house is like?"

"Isn't it lovely not to know!" cried Lilian; "everything about it will be such a surprise. When can we go, grandmother?"

"Oh, my dears, how you rattle on," said Mrs. Dorrance, half-laughing, and yet beginning to take an interest in Dorothy's plan.

Fairy was keeping up a running fire of conversation, but nobody paid any attention to her.

"Where is the place, grandmother?" asked Dorothy, who was taking it all a little more seriously than the others; "you must know at least what state it's in."

"Oh, yes, I know that. It's on the shore of Lake Ponetcong,—in the northern part of New Jersey."

"What a fearful name!" cried Leicester; "but I don't care if it's called Alibazan, so long as there's a lake there. You never told us about the lake before."

"A lake!" said Lilian, with an ecstatic air; "I shall just stay on that all the time. I shall have a rowboat and a sailboat and a canoe ——"

"And a cataraman," supplemented her brother; "you can use the hotel for a boat-house, Lilian, and we'll build a little cabin to live in."

"Don't go so fast, children," said Mrs. Dorrance; "if you'll give me a minute to think, I'm not sure but I could see some sense in this arrangement."

"Oh, granny, dear," cried Dorothy, clasping her hands beseechingly; "do take a minute to think. Take several minutes, and think hard, and see if you can't think some sense into it."

"As you say," began Mrs. Dorrance, while

the children were breathlessly quiet in their anxiety, "the living expenses would be very much less than in any boarding-house. And in a country-place like that, you would not need elaborate clothes. But there are many things to be considered; you see, I've no idea what the house is like, or in what condition we would find it."

"Oh, never mind that," pleaded Dorothy; "let's take our chances. That will be the fun of it, to go there, not knowing what we're going to. And anyway, we'll have room enough."

"Yes," said Mrs. Dorrance, smiling; "in a hotel you will probably have room enough. But what do you mean by saying you can do the housework? In the first place you're not strong enough, and secondly, you don't know how."

"I'll do the work," said Fairy. "I don't care if I am only twelve, I can cook; 'cause when I went to Gladys Miller's one day, she had a little stove and she showed me how. I'll do all the cooking, and you other girls can do the domesticker work. Leicester can

do all the man's work, and grannymother can be a Princess of high degree, and just sit and look on. And then on some days——"

"Oh, yes, we know how to work," interrupted Dorothy. It was always necessary to interrupt Fairy if anybody wanted to say anything.

"And I won't mind how much I have to do, if we have some outdoors around us. Only think, it's May out of doors now, and here we have to stay shut up in this old boarding-house, same as in December."

"You may go out for a while if you care to, little girl," said Leicester, assuming a grown-up air.

"I don't want to go out on paved streets," said Dorothy; "I want green fields and trees and cows."

"I want free life and I want fresh air," sang Leicester, "and I do believe we are going to get it. Come, granny, speak the word,—say we may go."

"I can't say, positively," said Mrs. Dorrance, "until I write to Mr. Lloyd and see what he thinks of it. If he agrees to the

plan, I suppose we might try it. But it is all so uncertain."

"Never mind the uncertainty," said Dorothy; "just leave it all to me. Now see here, grandmother, for twelve years you've looked after us children, and taken care of us, and now, I think we're getting old enough to look after ourselves. Anyway, let us try it. Let us all go up to the Domain, and spend the summer there. We'll do the best we can, and if we fail it will be our own fault. You're not to have any responsibility, you're just to be there as a kind of guardian angel and general adviser. Nothing very dreadful can happen to us,—at least, nothing half so dreadful as staying in the city all summer. Now just write to Mr. Lloyd, and don't ask his opinion, but tell him you've decided to do this, and just ask him how to get there."

"We can tell how to get there, ourselves," said Leicester; "let's look it up on the map. Fairy, get the big atlas, will you?"

Though Fairy was always called upon to wait on the other children, it was by no means an imposition, for the child was always danc-

ing around the room anyway, and dearly loved to do things for people.

Soon three of the Dorrance children were gathered around the table studying the map. Fairy, in order to see better, had climbed up on the table, and was eagerly following with her tiny forefinger the track of Leicester's pencil.

"It isn't so very far, after all," he announced. "It's just across the ferry, and then up on the railroad till you get to it. It looks awfully near. Oh, I wish we were going to start to-morrow."

"Why can't we?" said Lilian, who always favored quick action.

"There's *no* reason," said Mrs. Dorrance, smiling at the impetuous children; "of course we can *just* as well take the seven o'clock train to-morrow morning as not!"

"Now you're teasing, grandma," said Lilian; "truly, when can we go?"

"Just the minute school closes," answered Dorothy. "I suppose we must stay for that, —I must, anyway; but we could get off the last week in May."

Here the announcement of dinner put an end to their planning for the present, but so gay of heart were they over their happy anticipations, that for once they didn't mind the gloomy dining-room and their irritating fellow boarders.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEPARTURE

AFTER several interviews with Mr. Lloyd, and after discussing the matter with several other friends whose advice she valued, Mrs. Dorrance concluded that it was best to try Dorothy's plan. It did seem hard to keep the children in the city all summer, and however the experiment might result it could do no great harm in any way.

They were to start the last week in May, and though Mr. Lloyd had offered to go up with them, Grandma Dorrance had concluded that would not be necessary.

For all Mrs. Dorrance's gentle, helpless manner, the fine old lady had a certain reserve force, which often manifested itself in an unexpected decision.

Leicester, too, showed himself capable of rising to an emergency, and now that there was occasion for him to be looked upon as the

man of the family, he determined to play well the part. He suddenly seemed to be as old as Dorothy, and though he deferred to her judgment, he made many good suggestions which she was glad to accept.

Indeed, the thought more than once occurred to Grandma Dorrance that the experiences of the coming summer would teach the children a great deal, and strengthen their characters in many ways, whatever else its results might be.

Not that the Dorrance children became sedate and responsible all at once. By no means. Their discussions were quite as animated as formerly, if not more so; and as the time of departure drew nearer, they became so excited and excitable that had they not been going away, there is a possibility that Mrs. Cooper might have invited them to do so.

Many of their friends came to see them during their last few days in the city, and nearly all brought them gifts or remembrances of some sort.

Grandma Dorrance viewed with dismay the collection of souvenirs that the children

planned to take with them. It was the live gifts that troubled her most, and she was finally obliged to stipulate that they should be allowed to carry only one pet each. So Dorothy took a dog, a large and beautiful St. Bernard, which she had owned for some years. But as he was even less desirable in a boarding-house than children, they had been obliged to make his home with a friend who lived on Long Island. Dorothy had been in the habit of visiting him frequently, and a great friendship existed between them.

The twins chose a pair of rabbits, because they had never had any rabbits before, and as Leicester said, "What's a Domain without rabbits?"

Fairy hesitated long, between a kitten and a canary, but finally chose the kitten, as being less trouble and more comfort; and the bird was about to be returned to its donor. But Grandma Dorrance declared that she too was entitled to a pet and would take the bird for hers, whereupon Fairy was ecstatically happy.

It was a difficult caravan to plan and to

move, but one Monday morning the departure was successfully accomplished.

Two carriages and a dray-load of trunks and boxes formed the procession.

Mrs. Dorrance had concluded that much of the necessary work of the house, especially at first, would be too hard for the girls; and had therefore decided to take with them a strong young Irish girl to help.

One of the waitresses, who was about to leave Mrs. Cooper's service anyway, seemed just the right one. Her name was Tessie, and she was a devoted friend of the young Dorrances. Her Irish sense of humor made her delight in their pranks, and it was to the satisfaction of all that she accompanied the party.

They crossed the city without attracting attention, but the procession that filed onto the ferry-boat could not long remain unnoticed.

Fairy persisted in dancing ahead, and then dancing back to know which way to go next. She carried her kitten in a basket, and talked to it incessantly through the slats. Lilian carried the bird-cage, and Leicester, a box containing the rabbits. Dorothy led her big dog

by a leash, and as she had assumed a sudden dignity, born of the occasion, she made with the magnificent and stately animal beside her, an impressive picture. Tessie was entrusted with the care of Grandma Dorrance; and this was a wise arrangement, for though accustomed to traveling, Mrs. Dorrance was also accustomed to lean on some one else for the responsibilities of the trip.

Dorothy saw this more plainly than ever during their journey, and resolved more strongly than ever that she would relieve her grandmother of all possible care, and be a real help and support to her.

It was just as she reached this decision that Fairy lifted the lid of her basket and peeped in to talk to the kitten. But she opened the lid a trifle too wide and the frightened kitten jumped out and ran to the edge of the deck, where the poor little thing sat quivering, and shivering, and apparently just about to tumble into the water.

Involuntarily the four Dorrances gave one of their best concerted groans. The low moaning notes and the final shriek roused Dare, the

great dog, to a sudden wild excitement. Breaking away from Dorothy's hold, he flew after the tiny Maltese kitten, and taking her head in his mouth, rescued her from imminent peril.

But Fairy, not appreciating that it was a rescue, looked upon it as a massacre, and began to howl piteously. Whereupon Dare deposited the squirming kitten at Fairy's feet, and added his bark, which was no faint one, to the general pandemonium.

All of which so disturbed poor Mrs. Dorrance, that she was glad to have Tessie lead her into the cabin, and there make her as comfortable as possible with a pillow and some smelling-salts.

Meantime peace and quiet had been restored to the party on deck, and they were waving joyful farewells to the tall buildings on Manhattan Island.

"There's the old Flatiron," cried Leicester; "good-bye, old Flatiron! hope I won't see you again for a long while."

"There's the new Flatiron too," cried Lilian. "I don't want to see that again for ever so long, either."

"You'll see flatirons enough, my lady," said Dorothy, "when you find yourself doing the laundry work for a large and able-bodied family."

"I won't have to do that, will I?" cried Lilian, aghast; "nobody told me that!"

"Well, we needn't wash the clothes," said Dorothy; "but likely we'll have to help iron; that is, if we wear any white dresses."

"I'll promise not to wear any white dresses," said Leicester.

"I don't care what I wear, if we just once get into the country," said Lilian. "Oh Dorothy, what *do* you suppose it will be like?"

"Just like Mrs. Cooper's," said Dorothy, smiling.

"Well it can't be like that," said Lilian; "and so I don't care what it is."

Another excitement came when they were all getting packed into the train. Dare had to travel in the baggage-car, of which he expressed his disapproval by long and continuous growlings. The rabbits were put there, too, but they made less fuss about it.

The bird and the kitten were allowed in the car with the children, and this arrangement added to the general gayety.

Although Mrs. Dorrance naturally considered herself in charge of the expedition, and though Dorothy felt sure she was, and though Leicester hoped he might be, yet it was really quick-witted Tessie who looked after things and kept matters straight.

The ride through northern New Jersey was not picturesque, and as there was very little to look at from the windows, the four soon returned to their favorite game of guessing what the new home would be like.

"What shall we call it?" asked Leicester; "it ought to have a name."

"And a nice one, too," said Dorothy; "for, do you know, I think we shall live there always."

"Wait 'til you see it," said Lilian; "we may not even want to stay over night."

"We couldn't stay always," said Fairy; "how would we go to school?"

"I suppose we couldn't," said Dorothy; "but after we all get through school, then we

can ; and it will be lovely to have a home of our own, so let's get a good name for it."

"Why not the Domain?" said Leicester. "That's what we've always called it, and so it sounds natural."

"That isn't enough by itself," said Dorothy. "How do you like the Dorrance Domain?"

They all liked this, and so The Dorrance Domain was decided upon, and they all rushed to tell grandma the name of her new home.

It was noon when the train reached the Ponetcong Station. Here they all bundled out, bag and baggage, children and animals. But as the boat, in which they were to continue their journey did not leave until one o'clock, there was ample time to get some luncheon,—which more than pleased the four hungry Dorrances. Upon inquiry, they were directed to a small country hotel and soon found themselves confronted with many small portions of not over-attractive looking viands.

But for once, the children cared little about what they ate or how it was served, so eager

were they at the prospect of soon reaching their new home.

"What do you suppose it will be like?" said Lilian, quite as if she were propounding a brand-new conundrum.

"I've s'posed everything I can possibly think of," said Leicester; "but I'm willing to guess again if you want me to."

"It isn't worth while guessing much more," said Dorothy; "for very soon we will *know*. Now, Lilian, you and Fairy stay here with grandma, and Leicester and I will go over to that little store across the street and buy some things to take with us for supper to-night. Tessie may go too, to help us carry them."

But this plan was far from acceptable.

"That isn't fair!" cried Lilian; "buying things for our own home is the most fun yet, and I think we all ought to go together."

"So do I," said Fairy. "Let Tessie stay with grandma, and us four will go to purchase the eatabubbles."

Fairy did not stutter, but, when excited, she was apt to put extra syllables in her words.

"Come on, then," said Dorothy, and with

Dare bounding beside them, the four ran across the road to the little grocery shop.

"Let's be very sensible," said Dorothy, "and get just the right things. You know young housekeepers always do ridiculous things when they go to buy provisions. Now what do we need most?"

"Bread," said the twins together, and surely nobody could have criticised their suggestion as ridiculous.

"Yes," said Dorothy, and then turning to the grocer, she said politely, "Have you any bread?"

"Yes, miss," replied the grocer, staring in amazement at the four excited children; "what kind?"

"Why, just bread," said Dorothy; "fresh bread, you know. Is there more than one kind?"

"Yes, miss. Square loaf, long loaf, twist loaf and raisin bread."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dorothy, appalled by this superabundant variety.

But Leicester came to the rescue. "Raisin bread," said he; "that's the kind. And then we want some butter, if you please."

"Print, pat or tub?"

"Oh, not a whole tub full," said Dorothy, diligently trying to be sensible; "we couldn't carry a tub. I think we'll take a—a print."

"Yes; miss; anything else?"

The weight of responsibility was so great, that no one spoke for a moment, and then Fairy, in a burst of confidence began:

"You see, mister, we've never bought anything before; we've just eaten other people's things; but now we've got a home of our own, a really truly home, and these things are to eat in it. So of course you see we have to be very careful what we buy. We're trying very hard to be sensible housekeepers, 'cause my sister says we must, and she knows everything in the world. And so if you could 'vise us a little, we'd know better 'bout selectioning."

After this speech, a few questions from the grocer resulted in a frank and straightforward statement of the case by Dorothy, and then a judicious selection was made of immediate necessities for the commissary department of The Dorrance Domain.

CHAPTER V

THE MAMIE MEAD

AS the man of the family and courier of the expedition, Leicester had assumed an air of importance, and looked after the baggage checks, tickets and time-tables with an effect of official guardianship.

"Why, it's a steamboat!" exclaimed Fairy, as a diminutive steamer came puffing up to the dock. "I thought it would be a canal-boat."

"People don't travel to a Domain in a canal-boat, my child," said Leicester, instructively.

"But you said we'd go on the canal," insisted Fairy; "and I want to see what a canal is like. There is one in my geography ——"

"Skip aboard, kidlums, and you'll soon see what a canal is like," said Leicester, who was marshaling his party over the gangplank.

The *Mamie Mead* was the very smallest

steamboat the children had ever seen, and it seemed like playing house to establish themselves on its tiny deck. Dare seemed to find it inadequate to his ideas of proportion, and he stalked around, knocking over chairs and camp-stools with a fine air of indifference.

Grandma Dorrance, who by this time was rather tired by the journey, was made as comfortable as possible, and then the children prepared to enjoy the excitements of their first trip on a canal.

The smoothness of the water amazed them all, and they wondered why it wasn't more like a river.

The locks, especially, aroused awe and admiration.

By the time they went through the first gate they had made the acquaintance of the captain, and could watch the performance more intelligently. It seemed nothing short of magic to watch the great gates slowly close, and then to feel their own boat rising slowly but steadily, as the water rushed in from the upper sluice.

"It's just like Noah and the Ark," ex-

claimed Fairy, "when the floods made them go up and up."

"It's exactly like that," agreed Dorothy, as the waters kept rising; "and we've nearly as many animals on board as he had."

All too soon they had risen to the level of the lake, and another pair of great gates swung open to let them through.

"Are we going to stay on top?" asked Fairy; "or must we go down again?"

"You'll stay on top this time, little missie," said good-natured old Captain Kane, smiling at Fairy. "This boat ain't no submarine to dive down into the lake."

"But you dived up into the lake," insisted Fairy.

"That was the only way to get here, miss. But any day you would like to go back and dive down, here's the man that will take you. The *Mamie Mead* is always glad of passengers. She don't get none too many nowadays."

"Why doesn't she?" asked Leicester, with interest.

"Well, you see, sir, since the hotel's been empty, they ain't no call for *Mamie* much.

So whenever you kids wants a free ride, just come down to the dock and wave something. If so be's I'm goin' by, I'll stop and take you on. Is the place you're goin' near the hotel?"

"Near the hotel!" cried Dorothy; "why we're going *to* the hotel."

"You can't. 'Tain't open."

"I know it," said Dorothy; "but it will be when we get there. We have all the keys."

"For the land's sake! And what are you goin' to do there?"

"We're going to live there," exclaimed Leicester; "we own the place,—that is, my grandmother does."

"Own it? Own the Dorrance place?"

"Yes; we're all Dorrances."

"For the land's sake! Well, when you want to go down to the station for anything, this here boat's at your service,—that is, if I'm up this way."

"Do you come up this way often?" asked Dorothy, who appreciated the possible value of this offer.

"I allus comes once a week, miss. I goes

over to Dolan's Point every Saturday. Will you be here till Saturday?"

"Saturday! Why we're going to stay all summer."

"Beggin' your pardon, miss, but I don't think as how you will. Just the few of you shakin' around in that big hotel! It's ridikilus!"

"Ridiculous or not, we're going to do it," said Leicester, stoutly; "but we thank you for your offer, Captain Kane, and very likely we'll be glad to accept it."

"Well, there's your home," said Captain Kane, as a large white building began to be visible through the trees.

Without a word, the Dorrance children looked in the direction the captain indicated.

High up on the sloping shore of the lake, they saw a great house which seemed to be an interminable length of tall, white columns supporting tiers of verandas.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dorothy, "that can't be it! that great, big place!"

"It looks like the Pantheon," said Lilian.

"You mean the Parthenon," said Leicester;

"but I never can tell them apart, myself. Anyway, if that's the Dorrance Domain, it's all right! What do you think, Fairy?"

Fairy looked at the big hotel, and then said thoughtfully, "I guess we'll have room enough."

"I guess we will," cried Dorothy, laughing; and then they all ran to Grandma Dorrance, to show her the wonderful sight.

The good lady was also astounded at the enormous size of the hotel, and greatly impressed with the beauty of the scene. It was about three o'clock, on a lovely May afternoon, and the hotel, which faced the west, gleamed among trees which shaded from the palest spring tints to the dark evergreens. It was at the top of a high slope, but behind it was a background of other hills, and in the distance, mountains.

"*Aren't* you glad we came? Oh, granny-mother, *aren't* you glad we came?" cried Dorothy, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

"Indeed I am, dear; but I had no idea it was such an immense house. How can we take care of it?"

"That question will come later," said Leicester; "the thing is now, how shall we get to it. How *do* people get to it, Captain Kane?"

"Steps," answered the captain, laconically.

"Up from the dock?"

"Yep; a hundred and forty of 'em."

"Oh, how can grandmother climb all those?"

"Settin'-places all the way along," suggested the captain, cheerfully.

"Oh, you mean landing-places on the stairway?"

"Yep; so folks can rest. I guess your grandma'll get up all right; but what about all your trunks and things?"

"Why I don't know," said Leicester, suddenly losing his air of capable importance.

"Well, there's old Hickox; you might get him."

"Where can we find Mr. Hickox?"

"He's most generally settin' around the dock. Favorite restin'-place of his. Think I can see him there now."

After a few moments more the *Mamie Mead* bumped against the dock.

"Our own dock!" cried Dorothy; "oh, isn't it gorgeous!"

Probably such an excited crowd had never before landed from the *Mamie Mead.* The children all talked at once; Grandma Dorrance seemed rejuvenated by the happy occasion; Tessie was speechless with delight; Dare gave short, sharp barks expressive of deep satisfaction and the canary bird burst into his most jubilant song. Doubtless the kitten was purring contentedly, if not audibly.

The trunks and other luggage were put out on the dock, and Mr. Hickox sauntered up and viewed them with an air of great interest.

"I guess this is where I come in handy," he said, with a broad smile and a deferential bob of his head that somehow seemed to serve as a general introduction all around.

Mr. Hickox was a strange looking man. He was very tall, indeed, by far the tallest man the children had ever seen; and he was also very thin. Or perhaps *lean* is a more expressive word to describe Mr. Hickox, for he

gave no impression of ill-health, or emaciation, but rather the leanness of muscular strength. His brown hair and side-whiskers were touched with gray, and his tanned face was wrinkled, but he did not seem like an old man. His blue eyes twinkled with good-humor, and his voice was delightfully kind.

Instinctively the Dorrance children felt that they had found a friend in this strange man, and they were grateful.

"Could you tell us, sir," said Leicester, "how we are going to get these trunks and things up to the hotel?"

"Well, yes, I can tell you that. I'm going to lug them up myself."

"What, carry them?" said Leicester, in surprise.

"Well, no; not carry them,—not exactly carry them. You see I've got a little contraption of my own; a sort of cart or dray, and I'll just put all that duffle of yours into it, and it'll be up to the top before you're there yourselves."

"You don't drag it up the stairs!"

"No, I go up the back way,—a rounda-

bout, winding path of my own. But don't you worry,—don't worry,—Hickox'll look after things. It'll be all right."

Although Mr. Hickox spoke in short staccato jerks, his remarks seemed to carry authority; and nodding his head in a manner peculiar to himself, he went off after his cart.

"He's all right, he is," declared Captain Kane; "but his old woman, she isn't so right. But never mind 'bout that. You'll see old Mrs. Hickox sooner or later and then you can size her up for yourself. Well, me and *Mamie* must be gettin' along. You all jest stay here till Hickox comes back, and he'll get you up the hill all right."

As Captain Kane went away the children could hear him chuckling to himself, and murmuring, "Goin' to live in the hotel! well, well!"

As Grandma Dorrance would want frequent rests by the way, Dorothy proposed that she should start on up the steps with Tessie, while the rest waited for Mr. Hickox.

That long specimen of humanity soon came briskly along, trundling a queer sort of push-

cart, which it was quite evident was of home manufacture.

"I made it myself," he declared, pointing with pride to the ungainly vehicle. "I was surprised that I could do it," he added modestly; "Mrs. Hickox, she was surprised, too. But she generally is surprised. You don't know my wife, do you?"

"No," said Dorothy, politely; "we haven't that pleasure."

"H'm," said Mr. Hickox, rubbing down his side-whiskers; "she's a nice woman,—a very nice woman, but you must take her easy. Yes, when you meet her, you must certainly take her easy. She doesn't like to be surprised."

"Do you think she will be surprised at us?" asked Lilian, who was well aware that many people thought the Dorrances surprising.

"Yes; I think she will. I certainly think she will. Why, to tell the truth, I'm some surprised at you myself,—and I ain't half so easy surprised as Mrs. Hickox."

As he talked, Mr. Hickox was bundling the luggage into his cart. He picked up trunks

and boxes as if they weighed next to nothing, and deposited them neatly and compactly in his queer vehicle.

"Any of the live stock to go?" he inquired.

"No," said Dorothy, "we'll take the animals; unless,—yes, you might take the rabbits; their cage is so heavy."

"Yes, do," said Leicester; "then I'll carry the bird-cage, and you girls can manage the dog and the kitten."

So everything else was put into the dray, even the provisions they had bought at the grocery shop, and the children watched with astonishment, as Mr. Hickox started off, easily pushing the load along a winding path.

"He's the strongest man I ever saw," exclaimed Leicester; "and I'd like to go along with him to see how he does it."

"No, you come with us," said Fairy, dancing around, and clasping her brother's hand; "come on; now we're going up a million steps and then we will come to our own Domain."

Climbing the steps was anything but a work of toil, for continually new delights met their

eyes, and they paused often to exclaim and comment.

About half-way up they found grandma and Tessie sitting on one of the small landings, waiting for them.

"Now we'll go the rest of the way together," said Dorothy, "for we must all see our Domain at the same time. Go as slowly as you like, grandmother, we're in no hurry."

CHAPTER VI

THE DORRANCE DOMAIN

ALTERNATELY resting and climbing, at last they reached the top, and for the first time had a full view of the Dorrance Domain.

"Oh," said Dorothy in an awe-struck whisper, "that's our home! All of it!"

Leicester, from sheer lack of words to express his feelings, turned double somersaults on the grass, while Fairy danced around in her usual flutterbudget way, singing at the top of her voice.

Lilian, the practical, after one look at the great building, said excitedly, "Grandmother, where are the keys, quick?"

The hotel itself was a white frame building, about two hundred feet long and three stories high. Huge pillars supported verandas that ran all around the house on each story. Broad steps led up to the main en-

trance, and at one corner was a large tower which rose for several stories above the main part of the house.

Although the whole place had a deserted aspect,—the shutters were all closed, and the lawns uncared for,—yet it did not seem out of repair, or uninhabitable. Indeed, the apparent care with which it had been closed up and made secure was reassuring in itself, and the children eagerly followed Lilian who had gained possession of the front door key.

With little difficulty they succeeded in unfastening the great front doors and threw them wide open to admit the May sunshine.

They found themselves at first in a large hall which ran straight through the house. It was furnished in red, with a velvet carpet and satin brocade sofas, which seemed to the Dorrances quite the most beautiful furnishings they had ever looked upon.

Arched off from this hall was a good-sized room, which Leicester declared to be the office, and as soon as the windows of that could be thrown open, the desks and safe and other office furniture proved he was right. Open-

ing a wicket door, he flew in behind the great desk, and throwing open a large book which was there, he turned it around towards Dorothy with a flourish, and asked her to register.

"Oh," she cried, wild with excitement, "it's just like the Sleeping Beauty's palace. Everything is just as they went off and left it. Who registered last, Leicester?"

"The last is Mr. Henry Sinclair, who arrived here in July, summer before last."

"And nobody's been here since!" exclaimed Lilian; "just think of it! It seems as if we ought to register."

"You may if you like," said Leicester; "it's our register, you know."

But the ink was all dried up, and the pens all rusty, so they left the office and went to make further explorations.

Across the hall from the office was the great parlor. Many hands make light work at opening windows, and in a jiffy the parlor was flooded with sunshine.

Then there were more exclamations of delight, for the parlor appointments were truly

palatial. Gorgeous frescoes and wall decorations, mirrors in heavily gilded frames, brocaded hangings, ornate furniture, and a wonderful crystal chandelier made a general effect that contrasted most pleasurably with Mrs. Cooper's unpretentious drawing-room.

Even a piano was there, and flinging it open, Dorothy struck up a brisk two-step, and in a moment the twins were dancing up and down the long room, while Fairy, who had been dancing all the time, simply kept on.

Grandma Dorrance sank onto a sofa and watched her happy grandchildren, no less happy herself.

It was a daring experiment, and she did not know how it would turn out, but she was glad that at last she was able to give the children, for a time at least, that desire of their heart,—a home in the country.

After the grand parlor, and several smaller reception rooms, all equally attractive, they went back across the hall, and through the office to investigate the other side of the house. Here they found the dining-rooms. One immense one, containing a perfect for-

est of tables and chairs, and two smaller ones.

One of the smaller ones which overlooked the lake, Dorothy declared should be their family dining-room.

"There's more room in the big dining-room," said Lilian, slyly.

"Yes, there is," said Dorothy; "and I *do* hate to be cramped. Perhaps we had better use the big one, and each one have a whole table all to ourselves."

"No," said Grandma Dorrance, "we'll use the small one every day, and then some time when we invite all Mrs. Cooper's family to visit us, we can use the large one."

"Oh," groaned Lilian, "don't mention Mrs. Cooper's dining-room while we're in this one."

After the dining-rooms came the kitchens, supplied with everything the most exacting housekeeper could desire; but all on the large scale requisite for a summer hotel.

"I should think *anybody* could cook here," said Dorothy; "and as I propose to do the cooking for the family, I'm glad everything is so complete and convenient."

"You never can cook up all these things," said Fairy, looking with awe at the rows of utensils; "not even if we have seventeen meals a day."

"*Will* you look at the dish towels!" exclaimed Lilian, throwing open the door of a cupboard, where hundreds of folded dish towels were arranged in neat piles.

At this climax, Mrs. Dorrance sank down on a wooden settle that stood in the kitchen, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, "It's too much, girls, it's too big; we never can do anything with it."

"Now you mustn't look at it that way, granny, dear," said Dorothy, brightly; "this is our home; and you know, be it ever so humble, there's no place like home. And if a home and all its fixings are too big, instead of too little, why, you'll have to manage it somehow just the same. Of course, I'm overpowered too, at this enormous place, but I won't own up to it! I will *never* admit to *anybody* that I think the rooms or the house unusually large. I *like* a big house, and I like spacious rooms! I *hate* to be cramped,—as

possibly you may have heard me remark before."

"Good for you, Dot!" cried Leicester. "I won't be phased either. We're here, and we're here to stay. We're not going to be scared off by a few square miles of red velvet carpet, and some sixty-foot mirrors!"

"I think the place rather small, myself," said Lilian, who rarely allowed herself to be outdone in jesting; "I confess *I* have a little of that cramped feeling yet."

At this they all laughed, and went on with their tour of the house. Merely taking a peep into the numerous pantries, laundries, storerooms and servants' quarters, they concluded to go at once to inspect the bedrooms.

"Don't go up these stairs," said Leicester turning away from the side staircase. "Let's go back to the main hall, and go up the grand staircase, as if we had just arrived, and were being shown to our rooms."

"Oh, *isn't* it fun!" cried Fairy, as she hopped along by her brother's side. "I never had such a fun in my whole life! Wouldn't

it be awful if we were really guests instead of purporietors?"

"*You* wouldn't be a guest," said Leicester, teasingly; "no well-conducted summer hotel would take a flibbertigibbet like you to board!"

"Nobody would take us Dorrances to board anyway, if they could help it," said Fairy, complacently; "we all know how obnoxiorous we are."

"I know," said Grandma Dorrance, sighing; "and if we can only make a little corner of this big place habitable, I shall certainly feel a great relief in not being responsible for you children to any landlady."

"Oh, come now, granny, we're not so bad, are we?" said Leicester, patting the old lady's cheek.

"You're not bad at all. You're the best children in the world. But just so sure as you get shut up in a boarding-house you get possessed of a spirit of mischief, and I never know what you are going to do next. But up here I don't *care* what you do next."

By this time they had reached the entrance

hall, and assuming the air of a proprietor, Leicester, with an elaborate flourish and a profound bow, said suavely:

"Ah, Mrs. Dorrance, I believe. Would you like to look at our rooms, madam? We have some very fine suites on the second floor that I feel sure will please you. Are these your children, madam?"

"We're her grandchildren," volunteered Fairy, anxious to be in the game.

"Incredible! Such a young and charming lady with grandchildren! Now I should have said *you* were the grandmother," with another elaborate bow to Fairy.

Laughing at Leicester's nonsense, they all went up-stairs together, and discovered a perfect maze of bedrooms.

Scattering in different directions, the children opened door after door, pulled up blinds, and flung open windows, and screamed to each other to come and see their discoveries. Tessie followed the tribe around, wondering if she were really in fairyland. The unsophisticated Irish girl had never seen a house like this before, and to think it belonged to

the people with whom she was to live, suddenly filled her with a great awe of the Dorrance family.

"Do you like it, Tessie?" asked Mrs. Dorrance, seeing the girl's amazed expression.

"Oh, yis, mum! Shure, I niver saw anything so grand, mum. It's a castle, it is."

"That's right, Tessie," said Leicester; "a castle is the same as a domain. And all these millions of bedrooms are part of our Domain. Our very own! Hooray for the Dorrance Domain!"

The wild cheer that accompanied and followed Leicester's hurrah must have been audible on the other side of Lake Ponetcong. At any rate it served as a sort of escape-valve for their overflowing enthusiasm, which otherwise must soon have gotten beyond their control.

"I think," said Mrs. Dorrance, "that it would be wise for you each to select the bedroom you prefer,—for to-night at least. If you choose to change your minds to-morrow, I don't know of any one who will object."

"Oh!" said Lilian, "to think of changing

your room in a hotel just as often as you like, and nobody caring a bit! I shall have a different one every night."

"That won't be my plan," said her grandmother, laughing; "I think I shall keep the one I'm in, for mine, and make no change."

As it was a large, pleasant, southwest room, with a delightful view of the lake, it was thought to be just the one for grandma, and they all willingly agreed.

"Do you suppose there are sheets and pillow-slips and things?" asked Dorothy, and a pell-mell rush of four explorers soon brought about the discovery of a wonderful linen room.

Grandma and Tessie were called to look, and all exclaimed at the sight. It was a large room with shelves on all four sides and the shelves were piled with neatly-folded clean linen,—sheets, counterpanes, towels,—everything that was necessary.

"Whoever left this house last," said grandma, "was a wonderful housekeeper. I should like to see her and compliment her personally."

"Shure, it's wonderful, mum!" said Tessie, still a little dazed by the succession of wonders.

"Well then, children," went on grandma, "pick out your rooms, and Tessie can make up your beds for you, and when Mr. Hickox brings the trunks, they can be brought right up here."

"How clever you are, grannymother," cried Dorothy, kissing her. "I said I'd direct the arrangements,—and yet I never once thought of all that."

"Never mind, dearie, we don't expect an old head to grow on young shoulders all at once. And besides, you'll have enough to do down-stairs. Did I hear you say you're going to get supper? And is anybody going to build a fire in the kitchen?"

"I'll build the fire," cried Leicester, "just as soon as I select my room from the hotel clerk."

The boy ran down the hall and in a few moments returned, saying that he had made a selection, and would take the tower-room.

Of course they all flew to see it, and found

a large octagon-shaped room with windows on five sides, leaving only enough wall space for the necessary furniture. But it was a beautiful room, "just like being outdoors," Leicester said, and they all applauded his choice.

Just then the door-bell was heard to ring, and this gave the children a new sensation.

"Our own door-bell!" cried Dorothy; "only to think of that! Tessie, please go down to the door!" and Tessie went, with the four Dorrances following close behind her.

CHAPTER VII

MR. HICKOX

IT was Mr. Hickox who was at the door. By a winding path he had pushed his cart full of luggage up the hill, and now expressed his willingness to deposit the goods where they belonged.

The big man seemed to think nothing of carrying the trunks, one after another, up to the bedrooms; and meantime the children carried the provisions to the kitchen.

Although Dorothy was nominally housekeeper, and wanted to assume entire charge of all household arrangements, Grandma Dorrance had a long and serious talk with Mr. Hickcox regarding ways and means.

It was most satisfactory; for whenever any apparent difficulty arose, the kind-hearted man summarily disposed of it by waving his hand and remarking: "Don't worry.

Hickox'll look after things. It'll be all right!"

So convincing was his attitude that Mrs. Dorrance at last felt satisfied that there were no serious obstacles in their path; and like the sensible lady she was, she determined to let Dorothy have full power and manage her new home in any way she saw fit.

Dorothy's nature was, perhaps, a little overconfident. She was not inclined to hesitate at anything; indeed, the more difficult the undertaking, the greater her determination to succeed.

And so, when Mrs. Dorrance informed Mr. Hickox that Miss Dorothy was the housekeeper, and was in authority, Dorothy rose to the occasion and assumed at once a certain little air of dignity and responsibility that sat well upon her.

She, too, was encouraged by Mr. Hickox's continued assertions that it would be all right.

She learned from him that the nearest place where they might buy provisions was Woodville, where a certain Mr. Bill Hodges kept a store. His wares included everything that a

country store usually deals in, "and Bill himself," said Mr. Hickox, "is just the cleverest man in these parts."

"How do we get there?" asked Leicester, who had declared his willingness to consider going to market as part of his share of the work.

"Well, there're several ways. Haven't got a horse, have you?" Mr. Hickox said this, casually, as if he thought Leicester might have one in his pocket.

"No," said Leicester; "we don't own a horse. Is it too far to walk?"

"No; 'tain't any too much of a sprint for young legs like yours. It's two miles around by the road and over the bridge. But it's only a mile across by the boat."

"But we haven't any boat."

"Haven't any boat! well I should say you had. Why there is half-a-dozen rowboats belongs to this hotel; and a catboat too, and a sneak-box,—my land! you've got everything but a steamboat."

"And Captain Kane said we could use his steamboat," cried Dorothy, gleefully; "so

we've really got a whole navy at our disposal!"

"So you have, so you have," agreed Mr. Hickox, rubbing his long hands together, in a curious way he had; "and don't you worry. Whenever you want anything that you can't get with your navy, Hickox 'll look after it. It'll be all right!"

"Do you live near here, Mr. Hickox?" asked Lilian.

"Well, yes, miss. Just a piece up the road. And if you want some nice fresh garden truck, now and then,—just now and then;—we haven't got enough to supply you regular."

"We'll be very glad to have it, whenever you can spare it," said Dorothy; "I'll send for it."

"Well, no, Miss Dorothy. I'd some rather you wouldn't send for it. You see Mrs. Hickox she's apt to—to be surprised at anything like that."

"Oh, very well," said Dorothy; "bring it whenever it's convenient. We're always glad of fresh vegetables. And eggs,—do you have eggs?"

"Now and again,—just now and again. But when we have them to spare I'll bring 'em. It'll be all right. Now I must jog along; Mrs. Hickox will be surprised if I don't get home pretty soon."

"One thing more, Mr. Hickox," said Mrs. Dorrance. "Are there ever any burglars or marauders around this neighborhood?"

"Land, no, ma'm! Bless your heart, don't you worry a mite! Such a thing was never heard of in these parts. Burglars! ho, ho, well I guess not! Why I've never locked my front door in my life, and I never knew anybody around here that did."

After Mr. Hickox's departure, Leicester observed thoughtfully, "What a very surprisable woman Mrs. Hickox seems to be."

"Yes," agreed Dorothy; "I'm anxious to see her. I think I'd like to surprise her a few times."

"Well, he's a nice man," said Lilian; "I like him."

"Yes, he is nice," said Leicester; "and isn't that jolly about the boats? I'm going right out to hunt them up."

"Hold on, my First Gold-Stick-In-Waiting," said Dorothy; "I think you promised to make a kitchen fire."

"Sure enough, Major-domo," returned Leicester, gaily; "I'll do that in a jiffy. Where's the kindling-wood?"

"Where's the kindling-wood, indeed," returned Dorothy; "*you*'re to make the fire, and you're also to make the kindling-wood, and the paper and the matches! I'm not employing assistants who don't assist."

"All right, my lady. I'll make your fire, even if I have to split up that big settle for fire-wood."

With a wild whoop, Leicester disappeared in the direction of the kitchen.

"Oh, grannymother," cried Dorothy, "isn't it splendid that we can make just as much noise as we want to! Now you sit right here on the veranda, and enjoy the view; and don't you budge until you're called to supper." And with another war-whoop scarcely less noisy than her brother's, Dorothy went dancing through the big rooms, followed by her two sisters.

When she reached the kitchen, she found a fine fire blazing in the range.

Leicester sat on the settle, with his hands in his pockets, and wearing a complacent air of achievement.

"Anything the matter with that fire?" he inquired.

"How did you ever do it in such a minute?" cried his twin, gazing admiringly at her brother.

"Magic," said Leicester.

"Magic in the shape of Tessie," said Dorothy, laughing, as the good-natured Irish girl appeared from the pantry.

"Right you are," said Leicester; "that's Tessie's own fire. And she didn't have to split up the furniture, for she says there's lots of wood and coal in the cellar."

"Well, did you ever!" cried Dorothy; "I wouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that there was a gold mine in the parlor, or a pearl fishery up in the tower."

"I'd rather learn that there is something to eat somewhere," said Leicester; "I'm simply starving. What's the use of three

sisters if they can't get a fellow some supper?"

"That's so," agreed Dorothy; "and we all must go right to work. You can't help with this part, Leicester. You skip away now, your turn will come later. Now girls," she went on, as Leicester vanished, not without the usual accompaniment of an ear-splitting yell, "we're going to have an awful lot of fun; and we can make just as much noise and racket as we please; but all the same there's a lot of work to be done, and we're going to do it, and do it properly. It's a great deal easier if we have system and method, and so we'll divide up the work and each of us must do our own part, and do it thoroughly and promptly."

"Hear, hear!" cried Lilian, who adored her older sister, and was more than willing to obey her commands.

"What can I do?" screamed Fairy, who was dancing round and round the kitchen, perching now on the window-seat, now on the table, and now on the back or arm of the old settle.

"We must each have our definite work,"

went on Dorothy, who was herself sitting on the back of a chair with her feet on the wooden seat. "Tessie will have her share, but she can't do everything. So there's plenty for us to do. Grandma is not to do a thing, that's settled. If four women and a man can't take care of one dear old lady, it's high time they learned how."

As the youngest of the four "women" was just then clambering up the cupboard shelves, and singing lustily at the top of her voice, some people might have thought that the dear old lady in question had an uncertain outlook. But Dorothy was entirely undisturbed by the attitudes of her audience, and continued her discourse.

"I shall do the cooking,—that is, most of it. I'm a born cook, and I love it; besides I want to learn, and so I'm going to try all sorts of dishes, and you children will have to eat them,—good or bad."

"I like to make cake and fancy desserts," said Lilian.

"All right, you can make them. And I'll make croquettes and omelets, and all sorts of

lovely things, and Tessie can look after the boiling of the potatoes and vegetables, and plain things like that. You haven't had much experience in cooking, have you, Tessie?"

"No, Miss Dorothy; but I'm glad to learn, and I'll do just whatever you tell me."

"Fairy can set the table, and help with the dusting. We girls will each take care of our own rooms, and Tessie can take care of Leicester's. I'll attend to grandma's room myself."

"Let me help with that," said Lilian.

"Yes, we'll all help; and we'll keep the parlors tidy, and Tessie can wash the dishes and look after the dining-room and kitchen. Leicester can help with the out-of-door work; the grass ought to be mowed and the paths kept in order. But good gracious! none of this work is going to amount to much. If we're spry, we can do it all up in less than no time, and have hours and hours left every day to play, and read, and go out on the lake, and tramp in the woods, and just enjoy ourselves. Oh, isn't it great!" and jumping to

the floor with a bang, Dorothy seized the hands of the others, and in a moment all four were dancing around in a ring, while the three Dorrance voices loudly proclaimed that there was no place like home.

Tessie had begun to grow accustomed to the boisterous young people, and as she thought everything they did was nothing short of perfection, she readily adapted herself to her own part.

"What about the laundry-work, Miss Dorothy?" she asked.

"Why, I don't know," said Dorothy. "I hadn't really thought of that. I wonder if we can find a laundress anywhere around. We must ask Mr. Hickox."

"Now, Miss Dorothy, if you'll let me, I'm just sure I can do the washing and ironing. With all these beautiful tubs and things, it'll be no trouble at all, at all."

"Why if you could, Tessie, that would be fine. Let me see, we won't have many white dresses or fancy things, but there'll be lots of sheets and table linen. You know we're a pretty big family."

"Yes, miss; but I'm sure I can do it all. I'm strong, and I'm a good washer."

"Well, we'll try it, anyway," said Dorothy, "and see how you get along. We girls will help a little more with your work on Mondays and Tuesdays, and then I think it will all come out right."

Dorothy was a singular mixture of capability and inconsequence.

Her power of quick decision, and her confidence in her own ability, made her words a little dictatorial; but the gentleness of her nature, and the winning smile which accompanied her orders took from them any touch of unpleasant authority. Dorothy's whole attitude was one of good comradeship, and though much given to turbulent demonstration of her joy of living, she was innately of an equable temperament and had never been known to lose her temper.

Lilian, on the other hand, was more excitable, and more prone to hasty decisions which were afterwards rejected or revised. Lilian could get very angry upon occasion, but she had a fine sense of justice; and if she found

herself in the wrong, she was more than ready to confess it and to make amends. The two girls really exercised a good influence over one another, and the bonds of affection between them were very strong. Indeed the four Dorrances were a most loyal quartet; and though they teased each other, and made fun of each other, it was always in an honest good-humored spirit that was quite willing to take as much as it gave.

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. HICKOX

AT six o'clock the family sat down to supper.

Dorothy had a lingering desire to use the great dining-room, but Mrs. Dorrance had persuaded her that it was far more sensible to use the smaller one, and she had pleasantly acquiesced.

Indeed the smaller one was a large apartment, about four times the size of Mrs. Cooper's dining-room. The outlook across the lake was charming, and the room itself prettily decorated and furnished.

Fairy had wanted to use small tables, letting two sit at each table, but again Grandma Dorrance had gently insisted on a family table.

So the small tables had been taken from the room, and a good-sized round dining-table substituted, at which Mrs. Dorrance pre-

sided. Leicester sat opposite her, Dorothy on one side, and the two younger girls on the other.

Very attractive the table looked, for the china, glass and plated silverware were all practically new, and of pretty design. Tessie was an experienced and willing waitress ; and it is safe to say that the Dorrance family had never before so enjoyed a meal.

Many hands had made light work, and Dorothy's had made light biscuit, and also a delicious omelet. They had strawberry jam and potted cheese, and some sliced boiled ham, all of which they had bought at the grocery shop on the way up.

"It's a sort of pick-up supper," said Dorothy ; "but I'm not saying this by way of apology. You will very often have a pick-up supper. Indeed, I think almost always. We're going to have dinner in the middle of the day, because that's the better arrangement in the country."

Just at that moment, nobody seemed to care what the dinner hour might be, so interested were they in the supper under consideration.

"I think pick-ups are lovely," said Fairy, taking a fourth biscuit; "I never tasted anything so good as these biscuit, and I do hope Dorothy 'll make them three times a day. They are perfectly deliciorous!"

"You're very flattering," said Dorothy. "But I won't promise to make them three times a day."

"I could eat them six times a day," declared Leicester; "but I don't want Dot to be cooking all the time. What do you think, girls, there are lots of boats of every sort and kind. Shall we go out rowing this evening, or wait till to-morrow?"

"You 'll wait till to-morrow," said grandma, quietly.

"All right, grandma," said Leicester; "we 'll start to-morrow morning right after breakfast; will you go, too?"

"No, not on your first trip. I may go with you some time later in the season. And I'll tell you now, children, once for all, that I'm going to trust you to go on the lake whenever you choose; with the understanding that you're to be sensible and honorable about it.

The lake is very treacherous ; and if there is the least doubt about its being safe to venture out, you must ask Mr. Hickox about it, and if he advises you against it, you must not go. Also I trust you to act like reasonable human beings when you are in a boat, and not do foolish or rash things. In a word, I trust you not to get drowned, and somehow I feel sure you won't."

"Good for you, grannymother!" cried Leicester; "you're of the right sort. Why I've known grandmothers who would walk up and down the dock wringing their hands, for fear their geese weren't swans,—no, I guess I mean for fear their chickens weren't ducks. Well, anyhow, it doesn't make any difference ; you're the best grandmother in the world, and always will be."

After supper the Dorrances strolled through the hotel, and finally seated themselves in the great parlor.

Fairy plumped herself down in the middle of the floor, and sat cross-legged, with her chin in her hands.

"What's the matter, baby?" asked Leices-

ter; "aren't these satin sofas good enough for you?"

"Yes, but I like to sit in the middle, and then I can look all around. I am just goating over it."

"Goat away; we're all doing the same thing," said Dorothy; "now grandmother, you sit on this sofa; and I'll go 'way down to the other end of the room, and sit on that one, and then we'll holler at each other. It's *such* a relief not to be cooped up in a little bunch."

The twins seated themselves on opposite sides of the room, and then the conversation was carried on in loud tones, that delighted the hearts of these noise-loving young people.

So merry were they that their laughter quite drowned the sound of the door-bell when it rang, and before they knew it, Tessie was ushering a visitor into the parlor.

The great chandeliers had not been lighted, but the thoughtful Tessie had filled and lighted several side lamps, so they were quite able to see their somewhat eccentric-looking guest. She wore a black silk mantilla of an

old-fashioned style; and her bonnet which was loaded with dangling black bugles, was not much more modern. She was a small, thin little woman, with bright, snapping black eyes, and a sharp nose and chin.

"I'm Mrs. Hickox," she said, "and I'm surprised that you people should come to live in this great big hotel."

As Leicester said afterwards, if there had been any doubt as to the lady's identity, they would have felt sure, as soon as she declared her surprise.

"We are glad to see you, Mrs. Hickox," said Grandma Dorrance, rising with her gentle grace, and extending her hand in cordial greeting to her visitor. "Won't you be seated?"

Mrs. Hickox sat down carefully on the edge of one of the chairs.

"I'm surprised," she said, "that you should use this best room so common. Why don't you sit in some of the smaller rooms?"

"We like this," said Grandma Dorrance, quietly. "May I present my grandchildren, —this is Dorothy."

The four were duly introduced, and really behaved remarkably well considering they were choking with laughter at Mrs. Hickox's continual surprises.

"Do you propose to live in the whole house?" asked Mrs. Hickox, after the children had seated themselves a little more decorously than usual.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dorrance, "my grandchildren have been cooped up in small city rooms for so long, that they are glad to have plenty of space to roam around in."

"'Tisn't good for children to be left so free. It makes 'em regular hobbledehoys. Children need lots of training. Now that Dorothy,—my husband tells me she's head of the house. How ridiculous!"

"Perhaps it *is* ridiculous, Mrs. Hickox," said Dorothy, dimpling and smiling; "but I'm over sixteen, and that's quite a big girl, you know."

"Oh, you're big enough for your age, but there's no sense of your keeping house in a great big hotel like this."

"There's no sense in our doing anything

else, Mrs. Hickox," said Leicester, coming to his sister's rescue. "We own this place, and we can't sell it or rent it, so the only thing to do is to live in it."

Mrs. Hickox shook her head until the jets on her bonnet rattled, and the children wondered if she wouldn't shake some of them off.

"No good will come of it," she said. "This hotel has had six proprietors since it was built, and none of them could make it pay."

"But we're not keeping a hotel, Mrs. Hickox," said Grandma Dorrance, smiling; "we're just living here in a modest, unpretentious way, and I think my grandchildren are going to be happy here."

"Well, that's what Mr. Hickox said; but I wouldn't believe him, and I said I'd just come over to see for myself. It seems he was right, and I must say I am surprised."

Mrs. Hickox was a nervous, fidgety woman, and waved her hands about in a continuous flutter. She was all the time picking at her bonnet-strings, or her dress-trimmings, or the fringe of her mantilla. Indeed once

she pulled the feather of her bonnet over in front of her eyes and then tossed it back with a satisfied smile. "I often do that," she said, "to make sure it's there. It blew out one night, and I lost it. I found it again and sewed it in tight, but I get worried about it every once in a while. I'm awful fond of dress, and I hope you brought a lot of new patterns up from the city. I've got a new-fangled skirt pattern, but I don't like it because it has the pocket in the back. The idea! I was surprised at that. I like a pocket right at my finger-ends all the time."

As Mrs. Hickox spoke she thrust her five finger-ends in and out of her pocket so rapidly and so many times, that Dorothy felt quite sure she would wear her precious pocket to rags.

"What do you carry in your pocket?" asked Fairy, fascinated by the performance.

"Many things," said Mrs. Hickox, mysteriously; "but mostly newspaper clippings. I tell you there's lots of good things in newspapers; and we have a paper 'most every week, so of course I can cut out a good many. The only trouble, cutting clippings out of a

paper does spoil the paper for covering shelves. The papers on my pantry shelves now have had some clippings cut out of them, but I just set piles of plates over the holes. Well, I must be going. I just came over to be sociable. I'm your nearest neighbor, and of course up here in the country neighbors have to be neighborly, but I'm free to confess I don't favor borrowing nor lending. Woodville is nearer you than it is me, and I expect you'll do your trading there."

"Of course we shall, Mrs. Hickox," said Dorothy, flushing a little; "we are not the sort of people who borrow from our neighbors. But Mr. Hickox told us that you sometimes had vegetables and eggs to sell; if that is so, we'd be glad to buy them."

"When I have them, miss, I'll let you know," said Mrs. Hickox, shaking her bugles more violently than ever. "But you needn't come 'round inquiring for them; when I have them I'll let you know."

"Thank you," said Dorothy, who was only amused, and not at all angry at her visitor's hostile attitude.

But Lilian could not so easily control her indignation. "We can get vegetables and eggs at Woodville," she said. "We don't really need any of yours."

"Oh, well, I guess that'll be the least of your troubles," said Mrs. Hickox, edging towards the door, with a restless, jerky gait. "You're lucky if the tank don't burst, or the windmill get out of order, or anything happen that will be really worth worrying over."

By this time Mrs. Hickox had backed out and edged along until she was on the veranda. "Good-bye," she said, awkwardly; "come to see me, when you feel to do so; but I ain't noways set on having company. I like the little one best, though."

This sudden avowal so startled Fairy, that she fell off the newel-post where she had been daintily balancing herself on one foot. As Leicester caught her in his arms, no harm was done, but Mrs. Hickox ejaculated, with a little more force than usual, "Well, I *am* surprised!"

"That's why I tumbled over," said Fairy, looking intently at Mrs. Hickox, "'cause *I*

was so s'prised that you said you liked me best. If you want me to, I'll come to see you with great pleasure and delight."

"Come once in a while," said Mrs. Hickox, cautiously; "but I don't want you racing there all the time."

"No, I won't race there all the time," said Fairy, seriously. "I'll just race down about once a day. Where do you live?"

"I live in the yellow house,—the first one down the road. But you needn't come more than once a week."

"All right," said Fairy, cheerfully; "we'll make it Wednesdays then. I love to have things to do on Wednesday, 'cause I used to take my music lesson on that day, and it's so lonesome not to have anything special to do."

While Fairy was talking, Mrs. Hickox had shaken hands all around, and had backed down the steps.

"Good-bye," she said, vigorously waving both hands as she went away.

"Well, of all queer people!" exclaimed Dorothy, as they went back to the parlor. "I'm glad we haven't many neighbors, if

they're all like that. Mr. Hickox is funny enough, but she's funnier yet."

"We don't care whether we have neighbors or not, we've got the Dorrance Domain," said Leicester; "and that's enough to make us happy, and keep us so."

"So say we all of us," cried Lilian; "the Dorrance Domain forever!"

As usual, this was merely a signal for a series of jubilant hurrahs, and quiet Grandma Dorrance sat on her sofa, and listened contentedly to her happy, if noisy brood.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLOATING BRIDGE

NEXT morning the young Dorrances experienced for the first time the joy of going to market.

Their appointed household tasks were all done first, for Dorothy had insisted on that. Then she and Tessie had conferred as to what was needed, and she had made out a list.

Grandma Dorrance had decreed against a sailboat for the children alone; but they were at liberty to go in a rowboat.

So down the steps the four ran, and found Mr. Hickox waiting for them at the dock.

He had put a boat in the water for them. It was a round-bottomed boat, but wide and roomy; easy to row and provided with two pairs of shining oars.

"Can any of you row?" inquired Mr. Hickox, looking uncertainly at the children; "for I can't go along with you this morning.

Mrs. Hickox, she wants me to work in the garden,—she says the weeds are higher 'n a kite."

"We can row," said Leicester; "but not so very well. We haven't had much experience, you know. But we're going to learn."

"I thought we'd each have a boat," said Fairy; "I want to learn to row. I want to be a 'sperinshed boat-lady."

"You can learn to row, baby, but you can't go in a boat all by yourself until you *have* learned."

"But I 'most know how now."

"Well I'll tell you how we'll fix it; two of us will row going over, and the other two can row coming back. To divide up evenly, suppose Dorothy and Lilian row over, and Fairy and I will row home." This was a bit of self-sacrifice on Leicester's part, for he was most eager to handle the oars himself.

Mr. Hickox quite appreciated the boy's attitude, and nodded approvingly at him but he only said: "All right, sonny, you sit in the stern and steer, and I make no doubt these young ladies 'll row you over in fine shape."

Fairy was safely settled in the bow, with an admonition to sit still for once in her life; and then Dorothy and Lilian excitedly grasped the oars and splashed away.

It was not very skilful rowing, but it propelled the boat, and by the aid of Leicester's steering, they made a progressive, if somewhat zigzag course.

The morning was perfect. The lake calm and placid, with tiny soft ripples all over it. The green hills sloped down to its shore on all sides; while here and there, at long intervals, a house or a building gleamed white among the trees. The exhilarating air, and the excitement of the occasion roused the Dorrances' spirits far above normal,—which is saying a great deal.

The arms of the rowers grew very tired; partly because they were so unused to vigorous exercise, and partly because the rowing was far more energetic than scientific.

But the girls didn't mind being tired, and pulled away gleefully to an accompaniment of laughter and song.

Leicester would have relieved them, but

they had promised grandma they would not move around or change places in the boat until they had become more accustomed to nautical ways.

But it was only a mile, after all, and they finally landed at Dolan's Point, and guided the bow of their boat up on to the beach in a truly shipshape manner. Fairy sprang out with a bound that landed her on the dry sand; Leicester followed, and then helped the exhausted but victorious galley-slaves to alight.

"Isn't it glorious!" cried Dorothy, panting for breath, but aglow with happiness.

"Fine!" agreed Lilian, but she looked a little ruefully at eight blisters on her pink palms.

"That's all right," said Leicester, cheerfully; "you'll get calloused after a while; blisters always have to come first."

"Oh, pooh, I don't mind them a bit," protested Lilian; for the Dorrances were all of a plucky disposition.

On they went, following the directions given them by Mr. Hickox, and making wonderful explorations at every turn.

Dolan's Point seemed to be occupied principally by a large boathouse. This belonged to a club-house, which was farther up the hill, and whose turrets and gables shining in the morning sunlight, looked like those of an old castle.

Their way lay across the point, and then they were to cross a small arm of the lake by means of a bridge.

Dorothy had hoped for a rustic bridge, and Leicester had told her that it would probably be two foot-planks and a hand-rail.

But when they saw the bridge itself, they were really struck speechless with wonder and delight. It was a floating bridge, built of logs. It was perhaps eight feet wide, and was made by logs laid transversely and close together. They were held in place by immense iron chains which went alternately over and under the logs at their ends. Except at the sides of the bridge, the logs were not visible for they were covered with a deep layer of soil on which grew luxuriant green grass. The thick grass had been mowed and cared for until it resembled a soft velvet carpet.

On either side of the bridge was a hand-rail of rope, supported at intervals by wooden uprights. The rope rails and the uprights were both covered with carefully trained vines. Among these were morning-glory vines, and their pink and purple blossoms made an exquisite floral decoration.

Evidently the bridge was in charge of somebody who loved to care for it, and who enjoyed keeping it in order.

"Do you suppose we walk on it?" asked Fairy, with a sort of awe in her voice.

"Yes," said Leicester. "It must be meant for that; but isn't it the most beautiful thing you ever saw!"

It certainly was, and the children stepped on to it gently, and walked slowly as one would walk in a church aisle.

Although suspended at both ends, almost the whole length of the bridge rested on the water, and swayed gently with the rippling of the lake. It was a delicious sensation to walk on the unstable turf, and feel it move slightly under foot.

As they advanced further, it seemed as if

they were floating steadily along, and Fairy grasped Leicester's hand with a little tremor. When they reached the middle of the bridge they all sat down on the grass, and discussed the wonderful affair.

"I shall spend most of my time here," said Dorothy; "it seems to be public property, and I like it better than any park I have ever seen."

"It's lovely," agreed Lilian; "I'd like to bring a book and sit here all day and read."

"But it's so funny," said Fairy; "it's a bridge, and it's a park, and it's a garden, and it's a front yard,—and yet all the time it's a bridge."

"Well, let's go on," said Leicester. "I suppose it will keep, and we can walk back over it. And if we don't get our marketing done, we'll be like the old woman who didn't get home in time to make her apple-dumplings."

"If she had found this bridge," declared Dorothy, "she never would have gone home at all, and her story would never have been told."

But they all scrambled up and went on merrily towards the grocery store.

The store itself was a delight, as real country stores always are. Mr. Bill Hodges was a storekeeper of the affable type, and expressed great interest in his new customers.

He regaled them with ginger-snaps and thin slivers of cheese, which he cut off and proffered on the point of a huge shiny-bladed knife. This refreshment was very acceptable, and when he supplemented it with a glass of milk all around, Dorothy was so grateful that she felt as if she ought to buy out his whole stock.

But putting on a most housewifely air, she showed Mr. Hodges her list of needs, and inquired if he could supply them.

"Bless your heart, yes," he replied. "Bill Hodges is the man to purvide you with them things. Shall I send 'em to you?"

"Oh, can you?" said Dorothy. "I didn't know you delivered goods. I'd be glad if you would send the bag of flour and the potatoes, but most of the smaller things we can carry ourselves."

"Well I swan!" exclaimed Mr. Bill Hodges; "you're real bright, you air. How did ye come over? Walk?"

"No, sir," said Leicester. "We came in a rowboat; and then walked across the Point and over the bridge. We think that bridge very wonderful."

"And very beautiful," added Lilian. "Who keeps it so nice?"

"And doesn't it ever fall down in the water?" asked Fairy; "or doesn't the mud wash off, or don't people fall off of it and get drownded? and how do you cut the grass, and how do you water the flowers? It's just like a conservatorory!"

As Mr. Bill Hodges was something of a talker himself, he was surprised to be outdone in his own line by the golden-haired stranger-child, who, apparently without effort, reeled off such a string of questions. But as they referred to a subject dear to his heart he was delighted to answer them.

"That bridge, my young friends, is my joy and delight. Nobody touches that bridge, to take care of it, but Bill Hodges,—that's me

I'm proud of that bridge, I am, and I don't know what I'd do, if I didn't have it to care for. I'm glad you like it; I ain't got nary chick nor child to run across it. So whenever you young folks feel like coming over to look at it, I'll be pleased and proud to have ye; pleased and proud, that's what I'll be; so come early and come often, come one and come all."

"We'll bring our grandmother over to see it," said Dorothy, "just as soon as we can manage to do so."

"Do," said Mr. Hodges, heartily. "Bring her along, bring her along. Glad to welcome her, I'm sure. Now I'll go 'long and help you tote your bundles to your boat. I don't have crowds of customers this time of day, and I can just as well go as not."

The kind-hearted old man filled a basket with their purchases, and trudged along beside the children.

"Ain't it purty!" he exclaimed as they crossed the bridge. "Oh, *ain't* it purty?"

"It is," said Dorothy. "I don't wonder you love it."

"And there ain't another like it in the whole world," went on the prideful Hodges. "Of course there are floating bridges, but nowheres is there one as purty as this."

The children willingly agreed to this statement, and praised the bridge quite to the content of its owner.

"Fish much?" Mr. Hodges inquired casually of Leicester.

"Well, we haven't yet. You see we only arrived yesterday, and we're not fairly settled yet."

"Find plenty of fishin' tackle over to my place. Come along when you're ready, and Bill Hodges'll fit ye out. Pretty big proposition,—you kids shakin' around in that great empty hotel."

"Yes, but we like it," said Leicester; "it just suits us, and we're going to have a fine time all summer."

"Hope ye will, hope ye will. There ain't been nobody livin' there now for two summers and I'm right down glad to have somebody into it."

"Why do you suppose they couldn't make it pay as a hotel?" asked Dorothy.

"Well, it was most always the proprietor's fault. Yes, it was the proprietor's fault. Nice people would come up there to board, and then Harding,—he was the last fellow that tried to run it,—he wouldn't treat 'em nice. He'd scrimp 'em, and purty nigh starve 'em. Ye can't keep boarders that way. And so of course the boarders kept leavin', and so the hotel got a bad name, and so nobody wants to try a hand at it again."

When they reached the boat, Mr. Hodges stowed their basket away for them, helped the children in and pushed the boat off.

With gay good-byes and promises to come soon again, the children rowed away.

Leicester and Fairy took the oars this time, and Fairy's comical splashing about made fun for them all. She soon declared she had rowed enough for one day, but Leicester proved himself well able to get the boat across the lake without assistance.

CHAPTER X

THE HICKOXES AT HOME

ON Wednesday morning Fairy declared her intention of visiting Mrs. Hickox. She carried her kitten with her, and danced gaily along the road, singing as she went.

She found the house without any trouble, as it was the only one in sight; and opening the front gate, she walked up the flower-bordered path to the house, still singing loudly. She wore the kitten around her neck as a sort of boa, and this seemed to be a satisfactory arrangement to all concerned, for the kitten purred contentedly.

Fairy rapped several times at the front door, but there was no answer; so she walked leisurely around to the side of the house. There she saw another outside door, which seemed to open into a small room or ell attached to the house. She knocked at this door, and it

was opened by Mrs. Hickox herself, but such a different looking Mrs. Hickox from the one who had called on them, that Fairy scarcely recognized her. Her hair was done up in crimping pins, and she wore a short black skirt and a loose white sacque.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed, "have you come traipsing over here a'ready? What's the matter with your hotel, that you can't stay in it?"

"There's nothing a matter with the hotel, Mrs. Hickox," said Fairy, amiably; "but I said I'd come to see you on Wednesday, and so I came. I've brought my kitten."

"You've brought your kitten! for the land sake what did you do that for? Don't you know this is my milk-room? The idea of a kitten in a milk-room! Well I *am* surprised!"

"Oh, I think a milk-room is just the place for a kitten. Couldn't you give her a little drink of milk, she's awfully fond of it."

"Why I s'pose I could give her a little. Such a mite of a cat wouldn't want much;

but I do hate cats; they're such pestering creatures."

"But this one doesn't pester, Mrs. Hickox," said Fairy, earnestly. "She's such a dear good little kitty. Her name is Mike."

"What a ridiculous name! I'm surprised that you should call her that."

"It isn't much of a name," said Fairy, apologetically. "But you see it's only temporaneous. I couldn't think of just the right name, so I just call her Mike, because that's short for my kitten."

"Mike! short for my kitten! Well so it is, but I never thought of it before."

"All our other animals have regular names," volunteered Fairy. "Our dog,—his name's Dare; our two rabbits are Gog and Magog,—Leicester named them; or at least he named one, and let Lilian name the other. They're twins you know,—the rabbits, I mean. Then we have a canary bird and he's named Bobab. That's a nice name, isn't it?"

"Nice name? It's heathenish! What a queer lot of children you are, anyway."

"Yes, aren't we?" said Fairy, agreeably.

"We Dorrances are all queer. I guess we inheritated it from my grandpa's people, because my grandma isn't a bit queer."

"Oh, isn't she? I think she's queer to let you children come up here, and do what you are doing."

"Oh, that isn't queer. You only think my grandma queer because you don't know her. Why, I used to think you quite queer before I knew you as well as I do now."

"You consider yourself well acquainted now, do you?"

"Oh, yes; when anybody visits anybody sociaberly, like I do you, they know each other quite well. But I think it's queer why you call this room a milk-room." Fairy looked around at the shelves and tables which were filled with jars and pans and baskets, and receptacles of all sorts. The floor was of brick, and the room was pleasantly cool, though the weather had begun to be rather warm.

"I call it a milk-room because that's its name," said Mrs. Hickox, shortly.

"But *why* is that its name?" persisted

Fairy. "You keep everything else here as well as milk. Why don't you call it the butter-room or the pie-room?"

"Oh, I don't know. Don't pester me so with your questions. Here's a cookie; now I'll take you in the house, and show you the best room, and then you must go home. I don't like to have little girls around very much. Come along, but don't eat your cookie in the house; you'll make crumbs. Put it in your pocket until you get out of doors again."

"I won't pester," said Fairy; "you just go on with your work, whatever you were doing, and I'll play around by myself."

"By yourself! I guess you won't! Do you suppose I want a great girl like you rampoosing around my house! I've seen you fly around! You'd upset everything."

"I expect I would, Mrs. Hickox," said Fairy, laughing. "I just certainly can't sit still; it gives me the widgets."

"I guess I won't take you into the best room after all, then. Like as not you'd knock the doves over."

"Oh, do let me go! What are the doves?

I'll promise not to knock them over, and I'll hold Mike tight so she can't get away. Oh, come, oh, come; show me the best room!"

As Mrs. Hickox's parlor was the pride of her life, and as she rarely had opportunity to exhibit it to anybody, she was glad of even a child to show it to. So bidding Fairy be very careful not to touch a thing, she led her through the hall and opened the door of the sacred best room.

It was dark inside, and it smelled a little musty. Mrs. Hickox opened one of the window-blinds for the space of about two inches, but even while she was doing so, Fairy had flown around the room, and flung open all of the other window sashes and blinds. Then before Mrs. Hickox could find words to express her wrath at this desecration, Fairy had begun a running fire of conversation which left her hostess no chance to utter a word.

"Oh, are these the doves? How perfectly lovely!" she cried, pausing on tip-toe in front of a table on which was a strange-shaped urn of white alabaster, filled with gaily-colored

artificial flowers. On opposite sides of the rim of the urn were two stuffed white doves, facing each other across the flowers. "Where did you get them? Are they alive? Are they stuffed? What are their eyes made of? Were they your grandmother's? Oh, one of them had his wing broken. You sewed it on again, didn't you? But the stitches show. My sister has some glue, white glue, that would fix that bird up just fine. When I come next Wednesday, I'll bring that glue with me and we'll rip off that wing and fix it up all right."

"Well, I *am* surprised!" said Mrs. Hickox. "What do children like you know about such things? But still, if you think it would do well, I'd like to try it. I've got a newspaper clipping about that white glue, but I never saw any. Has your grandma unpacked her dress patterns yet?"

"I don't know," said Fairy. "I don't think she has any. We never make our own dresses."

"For the land sake! Why I thought they looked home-made. Well I *am* surprised!

But hurry up and see the room, for I want to get them shutters shut again."

Fairy didn't see anything in the room that interested her greatly. The red-flowered carpet, the stiff black horsehair chairs, and the marble-topped centre-table moved her neither to admiration nor mirth.

"I've seen it all, thank you," she said. "Do you want it shut up again? What do you keep it so shut up for? Do you like to have it all musty and damp? I should think some of your newspaper clippings would tell you to throw open your windows and let in the fresh air and sunshine."

"Why they do say that," said Mrs. Hickox; "but of course I don't take it to mean the best room."

"We do," said Fairy, dancing around from window to window as she shut the blinds. "We have that great big parlor over at the Dorrance Domain flung wide open most of the time; and the little parlors, too, and the dining-room and all our bedrooms."

"Well, I *am* surprised!" said Mrs. Hickox. "It must fade your carpets all out, doesn't it?"

"I don't know; we haven't been there three days yet, so of course they haven't faded very much. I guess I must go home now. Leicester went out fishing this morning, and Dorothy and Lilian went to market, and I'm just crazy to see what they've accumerated."

"Well, run along," said Mrs. Hickox; "and you can come again next Wednesday, but don't bring your kitten the next time. When you do come again, I wish you'd bring some of that white glue you were talking about; I would certainly like to try it. Here, wait a minute, I'll give you some gumdrops; then you'll remember the glue, won't you?"

"I'd remember it anyway, Mrs. Hickox; but I do love candy, per-tickle-uly gumdrops."

"Well, here's three; don't eat them all to-day."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hickox," said Fairy, taking the three precious bits of candy. Then saying good-bye, she danced away with her kitten tucked under her arm.

Shortly after Fairy's departure, Mr. Hickox came dawdling along towards his own home.

"I do declare, Hickory Hickox, if you haven't been and wasted the whole morning, fooling with those Dorrance young ones! Now what have you been doing?"

"Oh, nothin' in particular. Just helpin' 'em get settled a bit. Lookin' after their boats and things, and buildin' a little house for them rabbits of theirs. That Leicester, he's a smart chap; handy with tools, and quick to catch on to anything."

"Well I *am* surprised! Wasting a whole morning building a rabbit-coop!"

"For the land's sake, Susan, it ain't wasted time. They pay me for all I do for 'em, and they pay me well, too."

"They're extravagant people. They have no business to hire you to work around so much, when you've got plenty to do at home."

"Oh, don't worry; Hickox 'll look after things. It'll be all right."

Though he spoke carelessly, Mr. Hickox was in reality much disturbed by his wife's

sharp speeches. Long years of married life with her had not yet enabled his gentle, peace-loving nature to remain unruffled under her stormy outbursts of temper. He stood, unconsciously and nervously fumbling with a wisp of straw he had plucked from a near-by broom.

"You're shiftless and idle, Hickory, and you don't know what's good for yourself. Now do stop fiddling with that straw. First thing you know, you'll be poking it in your ear. I cut out a newspaper clipping only yesterday, about a man who poked a straw in his ear, and it killed him. That's what you'll come to some day."

"No, I won't."

"Yes, you will! But just you remember this safe rule: never put anything in your ear, but your elbow. But you're so forgetful. I am surprised that a man *can* be as forgetful as you are! Throw that straw away,—it's safer."

"Yes, it's safer, Susan," and Mr. Hickox threw his straw away. "And when you sit down to dinner, I hope you will tie yourself

into your chair. You may not fall off, but it's safer."

Mrs. Hickox gave her husband a scornful look, which was all the reply she usually vouchsafed to his occasional shafts of mild sarcasm.

"That big dog is a ridiculous extravagance," she went on. "He must eat as much as a man. I am surprised that people as poor as they are should keep such a raft of animals."

"Why the Dorrances aren't poor."

"Yes they are; and if they aren't they soon will be. Throwin' open that great big house for them few people, is enough to ruin a millionaire. That little girl says they use nearly every room in it."

"So they do," said Mr. Hickox, chuckling; "when I went over there this morning, they was every one in a different room; happy as clams, and noisy as a brass band."

"They're a terrible lot! I never saw anything like them."

"That Dorothy is a smart one," declared Mr. Hickox, with an air of great conviction.

"Some day she'll set Lake Ponetcong on fire!"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," said Mrs. Hickox, which was, all things considered, a remarkable statement.

CHAPTER XI

SIX INVITATIONS

JUNE came, and found the Dorrance Domain in full working order. The experiment seemed to be proving a complete success; and the six people who lived in the big hotel were collectively and individually happy.

Grandma Dorrance realized that all was well, and gave the children absolute liberty to do as they pleased from morning to night, feeling grateful that the circumstances permitted her to do this. Besides enjoying their happiness, the dear old lady was quite happy and contented on her own account. The delightful bracing air made her feel better and stronger; and the entire freedom from care or responsibility quieted her nerves.

Dorothy was complete mistress of the house. The responsibilities of this position had developed many latent capabilities of her nature,

and she was daily proving herself a sensible, womanly girl, with a real talent for administration, and much executive ability. She was very kind to Tessie, realizing that the Irish girl had no friends or companions of her own class around her; but Dorothy also preserved a certain dignified attitude, which became the relation of mistress and maid. She ordered the household affairs with good judgment, and was rapidly becoming an expert cook. This part of the domestic work specially appealed to her, and she thoroughly enjoyed concocting elaborate dishes for the delectation of her family. Sometimes these confections did not turn out quite right; but Dorothy was not discouraged, and cheerfully threw away the uneatable messes, and tried the same difficult recipes again, until she had conquered them.

The flaw in Dorothy's character was an over self-confidence; but this was offset by her sunny good-humored disposition, and she gaily accepted the situation, when the others teased her about her failures.

The days passed like beautiful dreams. The family rose late, as there was no special

reason why they should rise early. The children spent much time on the water in their rowboats, and also renewed their acquaintance with Captain Kane, who took them frequently for a little excursion in the *Mamie Mead.*

But perhaps best of all, Dorothy liked the hours she spent lying in a hammock, reading or day-dreaming.

She was fond of books, and had an ambition to write poetry herself. This was not a romantic tendency, but rather a desire to express in beautiful, happy language the joy of living that was in her heart.

She rarely spoke of this ambition to the others, for they did not sympathize with it, and frankly expressed very positive opinions that she was not a poet and never would be. Indeed, they said that Fairy had more imagination and poetic temperament then Dorothy.

Dorothy was willing to agree to this, for she in no way over-estimated her own talent, —she was merely acutely conscious of her great desire to write things.

So often for a whole afternoon she would lie in a hammock under the trees, looking across the lake at the hills and the sky, and assimilating the wonderful beauty of it all. This dreamy side of Dorothy's nature seemed to be in sharp contrast to her practical energetic power of work ; it also seemed incongruous with her intense love of fun and her enjoyment of noisy, rollicking merriment.

But these different sides reacted on each other, and combined with Dorothy's natural frankness and honesty, made a sweet and wholesome combination. Had Dorothy been an only child, she might have been given too much to solitude and introspection ; but by the counteracting influences of her diverting family, and her care of their welfare, she was saved from such a fate.

One day she was suddenly impressed with a conviction that Grandma Dorrance must often feel lonely, and that something ought to be done to give her some special pleasure.

" We all have each other," said Dorothy to the other children, " but grandma can't go chasing around with us, and she ought to

have somebody to amuse her, at least for a time. So I think it would be nice to invite Mrs. Thurston up here to spend a week with us."

Mrs. Thurston was a lifelong friend of Mrs. Dorrance's, and moreover was a lady greatly liked by the Dorrance children.

"It would be very nice," said grandma, much gratified by Dorothy's thoughtfulness; "I don't really feel lonely, you know; it isn't that. But I would enjoy having Mrs. Thurston here for a time, and I am sure she would enjoy it too."

"Hooray for Mrs. Thurston!" shouted Leicester; "and say, Dot, I'd like to have company too. S'pose we ask Jack Harris to come up for a few days. I'm the only boy around these parts, and I declare I'd like to have a chum. Meaning no slight to my revered sisters."

"I want Gladys Miller," said Fairy. "The twins have each other, and Dorothy has grandma, but I don't seem to have any little playmate, 'cept Mrs. Hickox, and she's so supernumerated."

They all laughed at this, but Dorothy said, "Why, we'll each invite one guest. That's a fine idea! There's plenty of room, and as to the extra work, if we all do a little more each day, it won't amount to much. I'll ask Edith Putnam, and Lilian, of course, you'll want May Lewis."

"Yes, of course," cried Lilian; "I'd love to have May up here. I never once thought of it before."

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Leicester. "Now here's a really brilliant idea. Let Tessie invite some friend of hers too, and then she can help you girls with the work."

"That *is* a good idea," said Grandma Dorrance, approvingly. "We'd have to have extra help, with so many more people, and if Tessie has any friend who would like to come for a week, it would be very satisfactory. Of course we will pay her wages."

"Wowly-wow-wow!" exclaimed Leicester; "won't we have rackets! I say, Dot, give Jack that other tower room, right over mine, will you? He'd like it first-rate."

"Yes, and we'll give Mrs. Thurston that big

pleasant room next to grandma's. Tessie and I will begin to-day to get the rooms ready."

"Hold on, sis, don't go too fast; you haven't had any acceptances yet to the invitations you haven't yet sent!"

"No, but they'll all come fast enough; we'll each write to-day, and we'll tell the people to get together, and all come up in a bunch," said Lilian. "I know May Lewis's mother wouldn't let her come alone, but with Mrs. Thurston, it will be all right."

"And Captain Kane can bring the whole crowd up from the station," said Leicester; "and we'll row down to the lock to meet them. And we'll have flags and bonfires and Chinese lanterns for a celebration. There's lots of Chinese lanterns up in one of the store-rooms,—we'll just have to get some candles. Jiminy! won't it be fun!"

"Perhaps it will be too hard on you, Dorothy," said Mrs. Dorrance; "doubling the family means a great deal of extra cooking, you know."

"Oh, that will be all right, grannymother;

and perhaps the lady Tessie invites will be able to help out with the cooking."

"Gladys's room must be next to mine," said Fairy, "so we can be sociarbubble. I shall take her to see Mrs. Hickox the first thing, and she'll proberly give us two gum-drops apiece."

Fairy's friendship with Mrs. Hickox was a standing joke in the family, and that lady's far from extravagant gifts of confectionery caused great hilarity among the younger Dorrances.

Full of their new project, they all flew to write their letters of invitation, and within an hour the six missives were ready, and Leicester volunteered to row over to Woodville with them. Tessie was delighted at the prospect, when Dorothy explained it to her.

"Shure, I'll ask me mother," she exclaimed; "she's afther bein' a fine cook, Miss Dorothy, an' yez'll niver regret the day she comes. Indade, she can turn her hand to annythin'."

Although Tessie was a superior type of Irish girl, and usually spoke fairly good English, when excited, she always dropped into a

rich brogue which greatly delighted the children.

"Just the thing, Tessie; write for your mother at once, or I'll write for you, if you like, and I hope she'll come up with the rest of them."

"Shure, she will, Miss Dorothy; she lives all alone an' she can come as aisy as not. An' she's that lonesome for me, you wouldn't believe! Och, but she'll be glad of the chance."

Feeling sure that most if not all of their guests would accept the invitations, Dorothy, Lilian and Tessie,—more or less hindered by Fairy, who tried hard to help,—spent the afternoon arranging the bedrooms. It was a delightful task, for everything that was needed seemed to be at hand in abundanee. The hotel when built, had been most lavishly and elaborately furnished, even down to the smallest details. The successive proprietors had apparently appreciated the value of the appointments, and had kept them in perfect order and repair. Moreover, as their successive seasons had been a continuous series

of failures, and few guests had stayed at the hotel, there had been little wear and tear.

Although Mrs. Hickox had not lost her grudging demeanor regarding her eggs and vegetables, yet Fairy was able to wheedle some flowers from her now and then, with the result that the Dorrance Domain had assumed a most attractive and homelike general effect.

Of course, the individual rooms showed the taste and hobbies of their several owners; while the large parlor which the family had come to use as a general living-room had entirely lost all resemblance to a hotel parlor, and had become the crowning glory of the Dorrance Domain. The Dorrances had a way of leaving the impress of their personality upon all their belongings; and since the big hotel belonged to them, it had necessarily grown to look like their home.

"I think," said Dorothy, "if they all come, it would be nicer to use the big dining-room."

"And the little tables," cried Fairy; "two at each one, you know. Me and Gladys at one, and Leicester and Jack at another, and grandma and ——"

"Oh, no, Fairy," said grandma, "that wouldn't be nice at all. It wouldn't even be polite. Use the big dining-room, if you wish, but let us all sit at one table. Surely, you can find a table big enough for ten."

"Oh, yes," cried Leicester; "there are a lot of great big round table-tops in the storeroom. They're marked 'banquet tables'; one of those will be just the thing."

"What do you do with a table-top, if it doesn't have any legs?" asked Fairy. "Do you put it on the floor, and all of us sit on the floor around it, like turkeys?"

"I suppose you mean Turks," said Leicester, instructively; "but no, we don't arrange it just that way. We simply put the big round table-top on top of the table we are now using, and there you are!"

"It will be beautiful," said Dorothy. "I do love a round table. You can make it look so lovely with flowers and things. I hope they'll all come."

Dorothy's hopes were fulfilled, and every one of the six who were invited sent a delighted acceptance. Tessie's mother, perhaps,

expressed the most exuberant pleasure, but all seemed heartily glad to come.

They were invited for a week, and were expected to arrive one Thursday afternoon at about four o'clock.

Vast preparations had been made, for every one was interested especially in one guest, and each made ready in some characteristic way.

Dorothy, as housekeeper, spent all her energies on the culinary preparations. She delighted the heart of Mr. Bill Hodges by her generous orders, and she and Tessie had concocted a pantry-full of good things for the expected visitors.

Lilian had put the hotel in apple-pie order, and given finishing touches to the guests' rooms, and Fairy had performed her part by inducing Mrs. Hickox to let them have an extra lot of flowers. These flowers were all of old-fashioned varieties which grew luxuriantly in Mrs. Hickox's garden ; and arranged with Lilian's exquisite taste, and by her deft fingers, they made really lovely decorations for parlor, dining-room and bedrooms.

CHAPTER XII

GUESTS FOR ALL

AS the guests would reach the Dorrance Domain by daylight, Leicester's plan of illuminating the grounds was scarcely feasible. But he had hung the Chinese lanterns on the veranda, and among the trees, and had put candles inside them, so they could light them up, and have their celebration in the evening.

It was arranged that the twins should row down to meet the *Mamie Mead* and then get on board, and escort the guests up the lake, towing their own rowboat.

Dorothy preferred to stay at home, to attend to some last important details in the kitchen, and Fairy said she would sit with grandma on the veranda, and await the arrival.

Soon after four o'clock, Fairy ran into the house screaming to Dorothy that the *Mamie*

Mead was in sight. This gave Dorothy ample time to run up-stairs for a final brush to her hair, and a final adjustment of her ribbons, and there was no air of a flurried or perturbed housekeeper about the calm and graceful girl who sauntered out on the veranda to greet her guests.

Fairy danced half-way down the steps to the dock, and then danced back again hand-in-hand with Gladys Miller. The others came up more slowly, and Grandma Dorrance rose with pleasure to welcome her dear friend Mrs. Thurston.

Then there was a general chorus of excited greetings all around.

The newcomers were so astonished and delighted at the novelty of the situation, that they could not restrain their enthusiasm; and the residents of the Dorrance Domain were so proud and happy to offer such unusual hospitality, that they too, were vociferously jubilant.

But the stranger among the newcomers was of such appalling proportions that Dorothy couldn't help staring in amazement.

Tessie's mother was quite the largest woman she had ever seen, and Dorothy privately believed that she must be the largest woman in the whole world. She was not only very tall, and also very broad, but she had an immense frame, and her muscles seemed to indicate a powerfulness far beyond that of an ordinary man.

To this gigantic specimen of femininity Dorothy advanced, and said pleasantly: "I suppose this is Kathleen?"

"Yis, mum; an' it's proud I am to be wid yez. The saints presarve ye, fur a foine young lady! An' wud yez be's afther showin' me to me daughter? Och, 'tis there she is! Tessie, me darlint, is it indade yersilf?"

Tessie had caught sight of her mother, and unable to control her impatience had run to meet her. Though Tessie was a fair-sized girl she seemed to be quite swallowed up in the parental embrace. Her mother's arms went 'round her, and Leicester exclaimed, involuntarily, "Somebody ought to rescue Tessie! she'll have every bone cracked!"

But she finally emerged, unharmed and

beaming with happiness, and then she led her mother away to the kitchen, the big woman radiating joy as she went.

"She jars the earth," said Jack Harris; "as long as she's on this side, the lake is liable to tip up, and flood this place of yours. But I say, Less, what a magnificent place it is! Do you run the whole shooting-match?"

"Yes, we do," said Leicester, trying to look modest and unostentatious. "It isn't really too big, that is,—I mean,—we like it big."

"Like it? I should think you would like it! It's just the greatest ever! I say, take me in the house, and let me see that, will you?"

The girls wanted to go too, and so leaving the elder ladies to chat on the veranda, the children ran in, and the Dorrance Domain was exhibited to most appreciative admirers.

Jack Harris was eager to see it all; and even insisted on going up through the skylight to the roof. This feat had not before been thought of by the Dorrance children, and so the whole crowd clambered up the narrow flight of stairs that led to the sky-

light, and scrambled out on the roof. Dorothy's dignity was less observable just now, and she and Edith Putnam romped and laughed with the other children as if they were all of the same age. The view from the roof was beautiful, and the place really possessed advantages as a playground. There was a railing all around the edge, and though the gables were sloping, many parts of the roof were flat, and Jack declared it would be a lovely place to sit on a moonlight night.

Then down they went again, and showing the guests to their various rooms, made them feel that at last they were really established in the Dorrance Domain. This naturally broke the party up into couples, and Leicester carried Jack off to his own room first, to show him the many boyish treasures that he had already accumulated.

Fairy flew around, as Jack Harris expressed it, "like a hen with her head off," and everywhere Fairy went, she dragged the more slowly moving Gladys after her, by one hand. Gladys was devoted to Fairy, and admired her thistledown ways; but being herself a

fat, stolid child, could by no means keep up to Fairy's pace.

Dorothy took Edith Putnam to her room, and being intimate friends the two girls sat down together, and became so engrossed in their chat, that when nearly a half-hour later, Lilian and May Lewis came in to talk with them, Edith had not yet even taken off her hat.

Although dear friends of the Dorrances', Edith and May were of very different types.

Edith Putnam was a round, rosy girl, very pretty and full of life and enthusiasm. She was decidedly comical, and kept the girls laughing by her merry retorts. She was bright and capable, but disinclined for hard work, and rather clever in shifting her share of it to other people's shoulders.

May Lewis, on the other hand, was a plain, straightforward sort of girl; not dull, but a little diffident, and quite lacking in self-confidence. Not especially quick-witted,—yet what she knew, she knew thoroughly, and had no end of perseverance and persistence. She was of a most unselfish and help-

ful disposition, and Lilian well knew that without asking, May would assist her at her household tasks during the visit, and would even do more than her share.

Dorothy frankly explained to the girls what the household arrangements were in the Dorrance Domain, and said, that since certain hours of the day must be devoted to regular work by the Dorrance sisters, the guests would at such times be thrown upon their own resources for entertainment.

"Not I!" cried Edith; "I shall help you, Dorothy, in everything you have to do while I'm here. Indeed, I just think I'll do up your chores for you, and let you take a rest. I'm sure you need one. Not that you look so; I never saw you look so fat and rosy in your life; but you mustn't work too hard just because you have company. You mustn't do a single thing extra for us, will you?"

"You mustn't dictate to your hostess, miss," returned Dorothy, gaily; "and I hardly think you can assist me very much, for I look after the cookery part, and I think you've given me to understand that you detest cooking. Also,

I most certainly shall do extra things while you're here. It is my pleasure to entertain my guests properly," and Dorothy smiled in her most grown-up manner.

"Good gracious! Dorothy Dorrance, did your manners come with your Domain, or where did you get that highfalutin air of yours?"

"Oh, that was put on purposely to impress you with my importance," said Dorothy, dimpling into a little girl again. "But truly, I must skip down to the kitchen now, and see if my Parker House rolls are rising, rose or having risen. No, you can't come, Edith; you'd spoil the rolls,—though you'd do it in a most well-meaning way. Now you girls all go out, and disport yourselves on the lawn, while I do my noble duty. Though I'm free to confess I'm scared to death of that awe-inspiring mother-person that Tessie has imported."

"I think she'll be helpful," said May Lewis. "She came up with us you know, and really she's wonderful. She looked after us all, and she's as funny as a red wagon."

"Red wagon!" exclaimed Edith; "she's nearer the size of a red automobile, and she has the same kind of energy that automobiles are said to have. I don't own one myself, so I don't know."

"I don't own one either," said Dorothy, "so I don't know how to manage one. But I suppose I must make a try at managing the bulky Kathleen,—so I may as well start."

The whole troop ran down the wide staircase, except Fairy, who slid down the banister, and leaving the others in the hall, Dorothy ran away to the kitchen.

There she found Kathleen proceeding in a manner quite in accordance with her appearance. She had assumed immediate and entire charge of the supper preparations, and was ordering Tessie about in a good-natured, but domineering way.

"Lave me have a bit o' red pepper, darlint," she was saying, as Dorothy came in; "this dhressin' is flat for the want of it. Ah, Miss Dorothy, is that you, thin? an' I'm jist afther shlappin' together yer salad-dhressin'. I ob-

sarved the things all shtandin' ready an' I whacked 'em up."

"Why, that was very kind of you, Kathleen," said Dorothy; "it has helped me a great deal. Where are my rolls, Tessie?"

"They was risin' too fast, miss," said Kathleen, entirely ignoring her daughter's presence, "an' I set 'em in the pantry forninst, to kape 'em back."

"Good for you, Kathleen! you're a jewel. I was afraid those things would get too light. Now, if you'll get them for me, I'll mould them over."

"Shure, I moulded them over, miss. They're all ready to bake, an' it's Kathleen as'll bake 'em for ye."

"Well," said Dorothy, laughing, "there doesn't seem to be anything left for me to do. Will you dress the salad, Kathleen?"

"I will that, miss! Now don't bother yer purty head anny more about the supper. Shure, it's Kathleen will attind to it all, intoirely. This shcapegrace, Tessie, will show me where things do be, an' yez needn't show

so much as the tip av yer nose, until it's all on the table."

"Kathleen, you're an angel in disguise, and not much disguised at that. Now look here, I'm very practical, and if you're going to stay here a week, we may as well understand each other from the start. I'd be delighted to leave this supper entirely in your hands; but are you sure that you can do everything satisfactorily? I'm rather particular, as Tessie can tell you, and to-night, I want everything especially nice, and well-served, in honor of my guests."

"Now, there's talk for ye! You're the right kind of a lady to wurruk for. But, ye need have niver a fear; Kathleen 'll do iverything jist as foine as yersilf or yer lady grandmother cud be afther desirin'."

"Very well, Kathleen, I shall trust you with the whole affair then. You can broil chickens, of course?"

"To a turrn, miss." Kathleen's large face was so expressive as she said this (and there was so much room on her face for expression), that Dorothy felt no further doubts as to the chickens.

She ran from the kitchen, laughing, and joined the group on the veranda.

"I'm a lady of leisure," she announced gaily; "that large and altogether delightful piece of architecture, called Kathleen, insists upon cooking the supper, over which I had expected to spend a hard-working hour."

"Jolly for Kathleen!" exclaimed Leicester, throwing his cap high in the air, and catching it on his head; "I do hate to have Dot working for her living, while we're all enjoying ourselves."

"Jolly for Kathleen!" echoed Jack Harris; "the lady of magnificent distances."

And though Grandma Dorrance did not join audibly in the general hurrah, she was no less glad that her pretty Dorothy was relieved from household drudgery on that particularly merry occasion.

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNWELCOME LETTER

THE week at the Dorrance Domain passed all too quickly, in the opinion of the happy young people.

There was so much to do, and every day seemed to bring new pleasures. The weather was of the most beautiful June variety, and the lake was as smooth as glass and most pleasant to ride upon.

One day they all went out in rowboats, and called themselves a regatta. Another day, Captain Kane took them all for a sail in the *Mamie Mead.*

But perhaps the nicest outing of all, was the day they had a picnic on the floating bridge. They carried their luncheon, and camped out on the bridge to eat it. Mr. Bill Hodges was delighted to grant them permission to do this, and brought them some fruit from his store as an addition to their feast.

"It's the strangest thing," said Edith Putnam, "to be on the land and on the water at the same time. Here we are, sitting on what seems to be good solid grass and earth; and yet if you dug a hole in it, you'd strike the lake right away."

"You'd strike logs first," corrected Jack Harris; "but if you bored through the logs you'd come to the water."

"It's perfectly lovely to feel the little swaying motion," said May Lewis, who in her quiet way was greatly enjoying the novel experiences. "I shall hate to go back to the city. How I envy you, Lilian, with a whole summer of this before you."

"But you're going away with your mother, next month, aren't you?"

"Yes; but we'll be cooped up in one or two little rooms at some seashore place; it is very different from having a whole hotel all to yourself."

"Indeed it is," said Dorothy; "we certainly did the wisest thing when we came up here this summer. And now that Kathleen is here, I have almost nothing to do in the

kitchen, and the rest of the housework that I do have to look after is so light that I don't mind it a bit."

"That's because you're so clever," said Edith, sighing; "you're systematic and orderly, and have everything arranged just so. I don't see how you do it. I should forget half the things, and get the other half all mixed up."

"I believe you would," said Dorothy, laughing. "And I did get somewhat mixed up at first. But I learned by experience, and besides I was just *determined* that I would succeed. Because I proposed the whole scheme, and of course, I wanted it to be a success."

"And it is a success," returned Edith; "and you have made it so. You have lots of perseverance in your nature, Dorothy."

"It's nice of you to call it by that name," said Dorothy; "but I think it's just stubbornness. I've always been stubborn."

"We all are," said Leicester; "it's a Dorrance trait. Grandmother hasn't much of it, but Grandfather Dorrance was a most determined old gentleman."

"There's only one thing that's bothering me, about our good times," said Dorothy. "And that is, that grandma can't enjoy them as much as we do. She doesn't care about going in the boats, and she can't take the long walks that we can."

"It would be nice if you had a horse," said May; "then she could go for a drive sometimes."

"That would be lovely," agreed Dorothy; "but I know we couldn't afford to buy a horse. We haven't very much money. That's the main reason we came up here, because grandma said we couldn't afford to go to the places we used to go to."

"But you might hire a horse," suggested Jack; "you have a barn."

"Yes, there is a small barn," said Leicester. "I think it would be great to hire a horse; that wouldn't cost much, Dot."

"No," said Dorothy, "I don't believe it would. But who'd take care of the horse, and who'd drive grandma around?"

"Why, I can drive," said Leicester, "or if grandma wouldn't trust me, Mr. Hickox could

drive her. He could take care of the horse, too."

"It's a good idea," said Dorothy; "let's go and ask Mr. Hodges about it now; he always knows about things of that sort."

The whole crowd scrambled to their feet, and ran gaily towards Mr. Hodges' place. They were not surprised, when he declared he had just the thing for them. A fat, amiable old horse, who was well accustomed to the steep mountain roads, and guaranteed perfectly safe; also a light road-wagon that would hold four, and that was very easy and comfortable. He would rent them this turnout for ten dollars a week, and he declared that they would find it most convenient; not only for pleasure drives, but for going to market or other errands. Indeed, he said, that the proprietor who had last tried to run the hotel, had engaged that horse for the season.

It struck Dorothy as a good plan; and being always quick at decisions, she agreed then and there to take the horse and carriage for a week, saying she felt sure that Grandma Dorrance would approve.

Leicester said he would drive it home, and any of the girls who wished to, could go with him, the rest going back in the boats. Dorothy said she would go with him, as she wanted to tell grandma about it herself.

As Fairy expressed a great desire to ride behind the new horse, she and Gladys were tucked in the back seat, and they started off.

Such a ride as it was. The hills were very steep, "perfectly perpendickle," Fairy called them, and if the old horse had not known just how to walk on the mountain roads, accidents might very easily have happened.

As it was they reached home safely, and drove up triumphantly to the Dorrance Domain where grandma and Mrs. Thurston were sitting on the veranda.

As the children had surmised, grandma was delighted with the opportunity to drive about, but said that she would feel safer if Mr. Hickox held the reins.

As Mr. Hickox was never very far away, he had observed the horse's arrival, and came over to inquire into the matter.

The explanation pleased him, and he said

amiably, "Don't worry. Hickox 'll look after the horse; it'll be all right."

So Grandma Dorrance arranged with Mr. Hickox, by an addition to the payment they made him for his various services, to take care of the horse, and to drive them whenever they might require him to. Then she and Mrs. Thurston planned to go for a drive that very afternoon.

As the Dorrance children were fond of all animals, the horse at once became a great pet, and though the elder ladies never went out except with Mr. Hickox, the young people went early and often, and both Dorothy and Leicester soon learned to be good and careful drivers.

With another diversion added to their catalogue of pleasures, the days flew by faster than ever, and although the guests stayed a fortnight instead of only a week, everybody was sorry when the day came for them to depart.

"It has been all pleasure," said Dorothy, "and not a bit of trouble; for you all made yourselves so handy and helpful that it was just like one big family."

"It has been a great treat to me," said Mrs. Thurston. "I have enjoyed every minute of it, and I have improved wonderfully in health and strength. I think you are a wonder, Dorothy; not many girls of sixteen have your powers of management. It is a gift, just as other talents are, and you not only possess it, but you have appreciated and improved it."

Dorothy blushed at Mrs. Thurston's kind praise, and inwardly resolved, that since Mrs. Thurston considered her household capability a talent, she certainly would endeavor to cultivate and improve it.

So the guests all went away, except Kathleen.

She begged so hard to be allowed to stay for a time longer, that Mrs. Dorrance consented.

"Shure, it isn't the wages I do be afther wantin', mum, but I likes to shtay here, an' I'll do all the wurruk for me boord."

This seemed a fair arrangement, as Kathleen really wanted to stay with her daughter, and the Dorrances were very glad of the big woman's services. She was an indefatigable worker, and really seemed to enjoy all sorts

of hard work. She would rise early in the morning, and wash windows or scrub floors before breakfast time. She was so capable and willing, that it seemed as if she fairly took charge of the entire family; and she was so large and strong that no hard work baffled her, and no exertion tired her.

Although the Dorrances naturally missed their guests, yet when they were alone again they were by no means lonely. They were a host in themselves; the children were congenial and thought there was nobody quite so nice as each other.

The days went by happily, and each one only made them more glad that they owned the Dorrance Domain and that they had come to live in it.

It was the third week in June when Grandma Dorrance received a letter from Mr. Lloyd, the contents of which were far from pleasant.

She called the children together in the great parlor, which they had come to use as a living-room, and her pale face quite frightened Dorothy.

"What is the matter, grannymother dear?" she said. "Has Mr. Lloyd found some one who wants to rent the hotel, and must we vacate at once?"

"Oh, don't mention such a calamity as that," cried Leicester; "if a man came up here to rent this hotel I should tell him to march right straight back again. The house is engaged for the season."

"It's far worse than that, children dear," said grandma; "Mr. Lloyd tells me in his letter that a great deal of repairing is necessary in the Fifty-eighth Street house. This will cost a great deal of money, and I have not enough to pay the bills."

Mrs. Dorrance looked so pathetically helpless as she made this admission, that Dorothy flew to her and kissed her, exclaiming, "Don't worry, grandma dear, it must all come out right somehow, for you know we are saving money this summer."

"I'm not so sure of that, Dorothy; I'm afraid we've been rather extravagant of late. Having so much company for a fortnight, was really very expensive; and the horse

is an added expense, and the two servants, —and altogether I feel quite sure we have spent more money than we could well afford."

"I never once thought of it, grandma," said Dorothy; "I just ordered the things that I thought it would be nice to have, and I didn't realize how the bills would count up. Are they very big?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dorrance. "Mr. Hodges' bill is quite three times as much as I had allowed for it; and I owe Mr. Hickox as much more. He has done a great deal of work for us, you know, and of course he must be paid."

"Oh, isn't it dreadful," said Lilian, "to have our lovely summer spoiled by money troubles!"

At this Fairy began to cry. The Dorrances didn't often cry, but when they did, they did it quite as noisily as they did everything else; and Fairy's manner of weeping, was to open her mouth as widely as possible in a succession of loud wails, at the same time digging her fists into her eyes.

She presented such a ridiculous picture that the children couldn't help laughing.

"Do stop that hullaballoo, baby," implored Leicester, "or we'll be so anxious to get rid of you that we'll offer you to Mr. Bill Hodges in settlement of his account."

Fairy was not seriously alarmed by this awful threat, but she stopped crying, because she had suddenly thought of a way out of the difficulty.

"I'll tell you how we can get some money," she said earnestly; "sell the horse!"

The other children laughed at this, but Grandma Dorrance said gently, "We can't do that, dear, for the horse isn't ours. We can't sell the hotel, for nobody seems to want it; so I can't see any way by which we can get any money except to sell the Fifty-eighth Street house."

The children looked aghast at this, for it was their cherished dream some day to return to the big city house to live. They didn't quite know how this was to be accomplished, but they had always thought that when Leicester began to earn money, or perhaps if

Dorothy became an author, they would be able to return to the old home.

And so Grandma Dorrance's announcement fell on them like a sudden and unexpected blighting of their hopes.

CHAPTER XIV

FINANCIAL PLANS

DOROTHY felt it the most. As the oldest, she had the greatest sense of responsibility, and she felt that she ought in some way to amend the family fortunes, but just how she did not know. She well knew how difficult it is for a girl to earn any money without being especially trained in some branch of usefulness; and she had often thought that she would learn some one thing well, and so be prepared against a day of misfortune. And now the day of misfortune had come, and she was not ready for it. She could not bear to think of selling the town house; she would far rather sell the hotel, but that, it seemed, was out of the question.

Leicester, on the other hand, took a more cheerful view of the situation.

"Oh, I don't believe we'll have to sell the house," he said. "It isn't so bad as that, is it, grandma?"

"I don't know, Leicester," said the old lady helplessly; "I never did know much about business matters, and now I feel more confused than ever when I try to straighten them out."

"But if we could just get through this summer, grandmother, when we go back to the city in the fall I feel sure I can get a position of some kind and earn a salary that will help us all out."

"You are a good boy, Leicester," said Mrs. Dorrance; "but it is very uncertain about your getting a position; and too, I don't want you to leave school yet."

"No, indeed," said Dorothy. "It wouldn't be right for Leicester to leave school at fourteen; and anyway, I think he ought to go through college. Now I am sixteen, and I have education enough for a girl. So I'm the one to get a position of some kind in the fall, and earn money to help along."

"What could you do?" asked Lilian looking at her sister. She had ample faith that Dorothy could do anything she wanted to, and was merely anxious to know in which direction she would turn her talents.

"I don't know," said Dorothy, very honestly; "skilled labor is the only thing that counts nowadays, and I'm really not fitted for anything. I would like best to write things; but I don't believe anybody would buy them, —at least, not at first. So I suppose the only thing that I could do would be to go into a store."

"And sell candy?" asked Fairy, with a dawning interest in the plan.

"Don't talk like that, Dorothy dear," said grandma, gently; "of course I wouldn't let you go into a store, and also, I'm very much afraid that your poetry wouldn't find a ready market. That may come later, but it will probably be after years of apprenticeship."

"Well, something must be done," said Dorothy decidedly; "and you can't do it, grandma; so we children must. I think we are old enough now to take the responsibility off of your shoulders; or at least to help you in these troubles."

"I wish you could, my dear child, but I fear there is no practical way by which we can raise the money that I must have, except to

sell the city house. It seems like a great sacrifice for a small reason; for you see if we just had money enough to pay our living expenses this summer, I could manage, I think, to come out nearly even by fall. But there is no way to provide for our living this summer, that I can see."

"Now I'm getting a clearer understanding of the case," said Leicester; "then if we children could earn money enough this summer to run the Dorrance Domain, we'd come out all right?"

"Yes, I think so, but how could you earn any?"

"I don't know," said Leicester, "but I've often read how other boys earned money,—and country boys, too. We might pick huckleberries and sell them, or we might raise a garden and sell things."

"Who would you sell them to?" asked Lilian, who was always practical. "Now I think a more sensible way would be to economize. Send away Tessie and Kathleen both; and then get along with fewer good things to eat. You know we've had everything just as

we wanted it, and I'm sure we could cut down our table expenses. Then we could give up the horse,—although he is a dear ——"

At this Fairy's wails began again, for she was devotedly attached to old Dobbin, the horse, and couldn't bear to think of parting with him.

"I think," said Grandma Dorrance, "that we will have to ask Mr. Lloyd to come up here and advise us; and then whatever he thinks best, we will do."

"Don't you have to pay Mr. Lloyd for his advice?" asked Dorothy, suddenly struck by the thought of what seemed to her an unnecessary expense.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dorrance; "that is, I pay him for attending to all of my business, and of course that includes his advice."

"I suppose we couldn't get along without him," said Dorothy, sighing; "but it does seem awful to pay him money that we need so much ourselves."

Mrs. Dorrance had a happy faculty of deferring unpleasant things to some future time; and not worrying about them meanwhile.

"Well," she said, "I will write to Mr. Lloyd to-morrow, and ask him to come up here; or if he can't come, to write me a letter advising me what to do. And until he comes, or his letter comes, we can't do anything in the matter, and there is no use worrying over it. I'd hate to discharge the servants, for you girls couldn't get along without anybody to help; and if we keep Tessie, Kathleen is no added expense, for her work well pays for her board."

This was not quite logical, but all were too miserable to notice it. For once the Dorrances went up-stairs to their beds without any whoops or hurrahs for Dorrance Domain.

As they were going up the great staircase, Lilian offered another of her practical, if not very attractive suggestions.

"We could," she said, "shut up the Domain, and all go to board with Mrs. Hickox for the rest of the summer. I'm sure she'd take us quite cheaply."

At this Leicester started the old Dorrance groan, which had not been heard before since their arrival at Lake Ponetcong.

They all joined in heartily, and groaned in concert, in loud, horrible tones that echoed dismally through the long corridors.

It was characteristic of their different natures that Grandma Dorrance went to bed, and immediately fell asleep in spite of her anxiety about her affairs; while Dorothy lay awake far into the night pondering over the problem.

She could form no plan, she was conscious only of a dogged determination that she would somehow conquer the existing difficulties, and triumphantly save the day.

She thought of Lilian's practical suggestions, and though she admitted them practical, she could not think them practicable. Surely there must be some way other than boarding at Mrs. Hickox's, or living on bread and tea.

"At any rate," she thought to herself as she finally fell asleep, "nothing will be done until Mr. Lloyd is heard from, and that will give me at least two or three days to think of a plan."

But try as she would, the next day and

the next, no acceptable plan would come into Dorothy's head.

"We are the most helpless family!" she thought to herself, as she lay in the hammock under the trees. "There is positively nothing that we can do, that's of any use. But I will do something,—I *will!* I WILL!" and by way of emphasizing her determination she kicked her heel right through the hammock.

The other children did not take it quite so seriously. They were younger, and they had a hazy sort of an idea that money troubles always adjusted themselves, and somehow got out of the way.

Leicester and Dorothy talked matters over, for though younger, he considered himself the man of the house, and felt a certain responsibility for that reason. But he could no more think of a plan than Dorothy could, and so he gave the problem up in despair, and apparently Dorothy did also.

However, even a serious trouble like this, was not sufficient to cast down the Dorrances' spirits to any great extent.

They went their ways about as usual; they

rowed and fished and walked and drove old Dobbin around, while their faces showed no sign of gloom or depression. That was the Dorrance nature, to be happy in spite of impending disaster.

Mr. Lloyd's letter came, but instead of helping matters, it left them in quite as much of a quandary as ever. He said that it would be impossible to sell the town house during the summer season. That the repairs must be made, or the tenants would not be willing to stay. He advised Mrs. Dorrance to retrench her expenses in every possible way, and stated further, that although the repairs must be made at once, it would not be necessary to pay the bills immediately on their presentation.

He said that although he would be glad to run up to see them in their country home, he could not leave the city at present, but he might be able to visit them later on.

Altogether it was not a satisfactory letter, and Leicester expressed open disapproval.

"That's a nice thing," he said, "to tell us not to pay our bills! As if we wanted to live with a lot of debts hanging over our heads!"

"I think it's lucky that we don't have to pay them right off," said Dorothy; "something may happen before we have to pay them."

Dorothy had a decided touch of the Micawber element in her nature and usually lived in the hope of something happening. And, to do her justice, it often did.

To the surprise of the others Fairy seemed very much impressed by the gravity of the situation, and more than that she seemed to think that it devolved on her to do something to relieve it. She walked over to Mrs. Hickox's to make her usual Wednesday visit, and though she skipped along as usual she was really thinking seriously.

She found Mrs. Hickox sitting on a bench under a tree paring apples, and Fairy sat down beside her.

"Of course I'm only twelve," she began, "but really I can do a great many things; only the trouble is none of them seem to be remunerary."

The two had become great friends, and though Mrs. Hickox was a lady of uncertain

affections, she had taken a great fancy to Fairy, and in her queer way showed a real fondness for the child. She had also become accustomed to Fairy's manner of plunging suddenly into a subject.

"What is it you want to do now?" she said.

"Well, you see," said Fairy, "we've failed, or absconded, or something like that; I don't know exactly all about it, but we're awful poor, and we can't have anything more to eat. Some of us want to come to board with you, and some of us don't. You see it's very complicrated."

"Yes, it seems to be," said Mrs. Hickox; "but how did you get so poor all of a sudden? I always said you were all crazy and now I begin to believe it. Your grandmother——"

"Don't you say a word against my grannymother!" cried Fairy, with flashing eyes. "She's the loveliest, best and wisest lady in the whole world. Only somehow she just happened to lose her money, and so of course us children want to help her all we can, and I

just don't happen to know what to do to earn money, that's all. And I thought you might know some way to tell me."

"I don't believe there's anything a child of your age could do to earn money," said Mrs. Hickox. "But now that I come to think of it, I did cut out a clipping just the other day, telling how to earn a good salary at home."

"Oh, that will be just the thing!" cried Fairy, dancing around in glee; "I'd love to earn a big salary and stay right there at the Dorrance Domain to do it. Do try to find it."

Mrs. Hickox was in the habit of sticking away her clippings in various queer places. She pulled out a bunch from behind the clock, and ran them over; "How to Take Out Ink Stains," "How to Wash Clothes in Six Minutes," "How to Protect an Iron Lawn Fence," "How to Stuff Birds, Taught by Mail," "Sure Cure for Rheumatism," "Recipe for Soft Soap."

None of these seemed to be what was wanted, so Mrs. Hickox hunted through another bunch which she took out of an old and unused teapot.

Fairy danced around with impatience while her hostess went through several collections.

"Oh, here it is," she said, at last, and then she read to the child a most promissory advertisement which set forth a tempting description of how any one might earn a large fortune by directing envelopes. The two talked it over, and Fairy wrote for Mrs. Hickox a sample of her penmanship, whereupon the lady at once declared that the scheme was impossible. For she said nobody could read such writing as that, and if they could, they wouldn't want to.

Fairy's disappointment was quite in proportion to the vivid anticipations she had held, and she was on the verge of one of her volcanic crying spells, when Mr. Hickox came in.

"Well, well, what's the trouble?" he said in his cheery way, and when Fairy explained, he responded:

"Well, well, little miss, don't you worry,—don't you worry one mite! Hickox 'll fix it. It'll be all right!"

And so comforting was this assurance, and

so sanguine was the Dorrance temperament, that Fairy felt at once that everything was all right, and dismissed the whole subject from her mind.

CHAPTER XV

A SUDDEN DETERMINATION

ONE afternoon, Dorothy sat on the front veranda, day-dreaming.

It was difficult to say which was the front veranda,—the one that faced the road, or the one that looked out on the lake. The house could be considered to front either way.

But Dorothy was on the veranda that faced the road, and it was a lovely warm, hazy day, almost the last of June, and notwithstanding her responsibilities, Dorothy was in a happy frame of mind.

She watched with interest, a carriage that was coming along the road towards her. It was nothing unusual in the way of a carriage, but there was so little passing, that anything on four wheels was always noticeable. This was a buggy, and contained a lady and gentle-

man who seemed to be driving slowly and talking fast.

To Dorothy's surprise, when they reached the entrance of the Dorrance Domain, they turned in, and drove up towards the house.

As they stopped in front of the steps, Dorothy rose to greet them; but though courteous in manner, beyond bestowing a pleasant smile, they took no notice of her. The gentleman got out first, then helped the lady out, and after a blank look around for a moment, as if expecting somebody, he threw his lines carelessly around the whip and escorted the lady into the house.

The doors were all open as usual, and Dorothy was so amazed to see them walk past her, that she said nothing.

Grandma Dorrance was lying down in her room; the twins had gone out rowing, and Fairy was down at the dock with Mr. Hickox, fishing.

The two servants were far away in the kitchen, and so the strangers walked through the great hall and out on the west veranda without seeing anybody.

Nonplussed, they returned to the office, and noted the unused look of the desks and counters there.

"Where do you suppose the clerk can be?" said the gentleman.

"Let us ask that young girl on the veranda," said the lady, and together they returned to where Dorothy was sitting.

"Excuse me," said the strange gentleman, "but can you tell me where I may find the clerk of this hotel?"

"There isn't any clerk," said Dorothy, smiling, as she rose to greet them.

"Then will you tell me where I can find the proprietor?"

Like a flash, an inspiration came to Dorothy. She realized in an instant that these people were looking for board; and equally quickly came the thought that she might take them to board, and so earn some of the money that she had been worrying about. It would certainly be no more difficult to have boarders than visitors.

And so, on the impulse of the moment, Dorothy replied:

"I am the proprietor."

"But I mean the proprietor of the hotel,—the owner of the place."

"My grandmother is the owner of this hotel; and if anybody is proprietor of it, I am. May I ask if you are looking for board?"

"Yes, we are," said the lady, impulsively; "and if you are the proprietor, I'm quite sure we want board at this hotel."

"Will you sit down, and let us talk this matter over," said Dorothy, offering them veranda chairs. "I would like to explain just how things are."

The strangers seated themselves, and looked at Dorothy with some curiosity and a great deal of interest. It was certainly unusual to come across a pretty girl of sixteen, who, in her ruffled lawn frock looked quite like the typical guest of a summer hotel, and then to be calmly told that she was the proprietor.

Dorothy also looked with interest at her visitors. The man was tall and large, of perhaps middle age; his face was kind and serious, but a smile seemed to lurk in his

deep blue eyes. The lady seemed to be younger, and was very pretty and vivacious. She had curly brown hair, and her brown eyes fairly danced with fun at the idea of Dorothy as a hotel proprietor.

"You see," said Dorothy, as they all sat down, this hotel is my grandmother's property; but as we couldn't rent it, we have all come here to live for the summer. My grandmother is quite old, and not at all strong, so the household management is entirely in my charge. I would be very glad to take some boarders if I could satisfy them and make them comfortable. I have never kept boarders, but," and here Dorothy's smile brought out all her dimples, "I have entertained company successfully."

"I should be delighted to come," exclaimed the lady, "if you are quite sure you want us, and if your grandmother would not object."

"Oh, no, she would not object; the question is, whether I could make your stay satisfactory to you. We have plenty of room; I could promise you a good table and good

service. But as there are no other guests, you might be lonely."

"We are not afraid of being lonely," said the gentleman, "for my wife and I are not dependent on the society of other people. But let me introduce myself before going further; I am Mr. James Faulkner, of New York City. Mrs. Faulkner and myself have been staying over at the Horton House, and that hotel is far too gay and noisy to suit our tastes. I'm a scientific man, and like to spend much of my day in quiet study. Mrs. Faulkner, too, likes to be away from society's demands, at least for a season. Therefore I must confess your proposition sounds most attractive, if the minor details can be arranged."

"I am Dorothy Dorrance," Dorothy responded, by way of her own introduction, "and my grandfather was Robert Hampton Dorrance. He has been dead for two years, and he left us this hotel property, which as we have been unable to rent, we decided to occupy. I would be glad to add to our income, and if you think you could be comfortable here, might we not try it for a week?"

"Oh, do let us try it," cried Mrs. Faulkner, eagerly; "do say yes, James,—this is such a lovely spot, and this hotel is quite the most attractive I have seen anywhere. Only fancy having no other guests but ourselves! it would be ideal. Oh, we must certainly come! I will decide it; we will come for a week at any rate."

"Very well, my dear, you shall have your own way. May I ask your rates, Miss Dorrance?"

Dorothy hesitated. She felt very inexperienced, and while she was fearful of overcharging, yet her practical instincts made her also beware of undervaluing the accommodations she knew she could supply.

"I don't know," she said, frankly, "what I ought to charge you. But you may have the best rooms in the house, and,"—here she smiled, involuntarily,—"as many of them as you wish. We have a really superior cook, and an experienced waitress. We have boats, and a horse and carriage, which you may use when you care to. As I know nothing of summer hotel charges, I would be glad if you

would tell me what you think would be right for you to pay."

Dorothy's frank honesty, and her gentle refined courtesy made a most favorable impression on Mr. Faulkner, and he responded cordially.

"For what you offer, Miss Dorrance, I think it would be fair if we should pay you the same as we are now paying over at the Horton House; that is, fifteen dollars a week, each, for Mrs. Faulkner and myself."

Dorothy considered a moment. She was a quick thinker, and she realized that this amount of money would help considerably towards the living expenses of the family. And the price could not be exorbitant since Mr. Faulkner offered it himself.

"That will be entirely satisfactory to me," she said, "and I shall hope, on my part, to satisfy you. When would you like to come?"

"I'd like to come to-morrow," said Mrs. Faulkner. "I've stood the Horton House just as long as I can. And our week is up to-morrow. But, excuse me, my dear, aren't you very young for these responsibilities?"

"I'm sixteen," said Dorothy, "and grandmother thinks my talents are of the domestic order. But I could not undertake to have you here were it not that our cook is not merely a cook, but a general manager and all-round housekeeper. And now, Mrs. Faulkner, if you really think of coming, wouldn't you like to select your rooms?"

Just at this moment, Fairy came flying through the long hall at her usual break-neck pace, and landed turbulently in the midst of the group.

"Oh, Dorothy," she cried, "we caught fish, and fish, and fish!"

"This is my sister Fairy," said Dorothy, "and I must explain, that when I said it would be quiet here, I neglected to mention that there are four of us children; and the truth is we are dreadfully noisy at times. Fairy, dear, this is Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner, who are perhaps coming to board with us."

With the pretty politeness that always underlay the boisterousness of the Dorrances, Fairy put out her hand to the strangers, saying: "I'm very glad to see you. Are you

really coming to stay with us? You must 'scuse me for rushing out like that, and nearly knocking you over, but I was so 'cited about my fish."

Fairy always looked more than usually fairy-like when she was excited. Her gold curls tumbled about her face, and the big white bow which topped them stood at all sorts of flyaway angles. She poised herself on one foot, and waved her hands dramatically as she talked.

Mrs. Faulkner was charmed with the child, and being possessed of some artistic ability, she privately resolved to make a sketch of Fairy at the first opportunity.

The two sisters escorted the guests through the hall, if Fairy's hop, skip and jump could be called an escort, and Dorothy showed them the lake view from the west piazza.

Mrs. Faulkner was enthusiastic over this, and declared that nothing would induce her to stay anywhere else but at the Dorrance Domain.

Mr. Faulkner, too, was impressed by the beauty of the lake. It was always most pic-

turesque in the late afternoon, and just now the clouds, lit up by the western sun, were especially beautiful. The lake itself was not calm, but was covered with smooth little hills of water, which here and there broke into white foam.

Some distance out, a boat could be seen, containing two people.

"That's my brother and sister," said Dorothy; "they are twins. They are fourteen, and are perhaps the noisiest of us all. You see," she went on, smiling, "I'm preparing you for the worst. Grandmother had great difficulty with the New York boarding-house keepers, because they thought the Dorrance children too lively. So I want you to be fully warned that we do make a great deal of noise. Somehow we can't help it."

"We don't yell so much as we used to," said Fairy, hopefully; "you see, Mrs. Faulkner, when we used to be cooped up in a boarding-house we just had to make an awful racket, 'cause we were so miserabubble. But here we have room enough to scamper around, and so we don't holler so much."

"I rather think we can survive your demonstrations of animal spirits," said Mr. Faulkner, with his kindly smile. "It will be a pleasant relief from the brass band which is the noise-producer over at the Horton House."

"We haven't any brass band," said Dorothy, suddenly realizing that they lacked many things popularly supposed to belong to a summer hotel.

"That's one reason why I want to come," said Mrs. Faulkner.

"I hope you will decide to come," said Dorothy; "and now, if you will excuse me a minute, I think I will ask my grandmother to come down and sanction our plan."

Leaving the strangers to be entertained by Fairy, Dorothy ran up to her grandmother's room and tapped at the door.

A few moments served to explain matters to Mrs. Dorrance, and though a little bewildered by Dorothy's sudden proposal, she thought the plan a good one, and went down prepared to give the strangers a cordial reception.

The Faulkners were much pleased with the gentle, gracious old lady, and Mrs. Dorrance decided at a glance that the newcomers were sensible and kindly people.

CHAPTER XVI

A DARING SCHEME

THE more they talked over the matter the more it seemed a sensible and feasible plan for all concerned. Mrs. Dorrance felt sure that with their two capable servants, and Mr. Hickox's varied usefulness, two boarders would make no more responsibility for Dorothy than her five guests had.

It was therefore decided to try the plan for a week, and if both sides were satisfied, to continue for the season.

Then Dorothy took the strangers up to select their rooms, and Mrs. Faulkner was as delighted at the idea of choosing from so many empty rooms, as the Dorrances had been on the night of their own arrival.

Agreeing to return the next day with their luggage, the Faulkners drove away, leaving

the Dorrances in a high state of delighted excitement.

"You see," said Dorothy to her grandmother, "something *has* happened. I felt sure it would, though of course, I had no idea it would be the Faulkners. But thirty dollars a week will help a lot, and I'm sure we can make them have a good time. They're lovely people,—you can see that at a glance. Mrs. Faulkner is so sweet, I think I'd be willing to pay her just to sit around and smile at me."

"Instead of her paying you to let her do it," said grandma. "But it is a good plan, Dorothy; for now we can afford to keep Kathleen, and pay her fair wages, which I did not otherwise feel justified in doing."

"And Kathleen is a whole army of servants, all in one," said Dorothy. "She'll be delighted at the idea of staying with us. I'll go and tell her about it now."

"I'll go, too," cried Fairy. "I want to hear her talk."

Out to the kitchen the two girls ran and noisily burst in upon Tessie and her mother.

The two Irish women were feeling rather blue, for Mrs. Dorrance had told them that she could not afford to let them both stay with her, and she was not sure that she ought to keep even Tessie.

"Arrah thin, darlints, yez'll be afther breakin' down the dures! Why musht ye always come so shlam-bang?"

"We can't help it, Kathleen," cried Dorothy; "we're just made so, I guess. But this time we've something to tell you,—something important."

"Im-porrtant, is it? Sorra a good thing cud yez tell me, ixcipt that yer lady grandmother wud be afther lettin' me shtay here wid yez. Me an' Tessie is afther grievin' sore at thoughts of lavin' yez."

"That's just it, Kathleen," screamed Fairy, who in her excitement and enthusiasm was scrambling up Kathleen's broad back. It was a favorite trick of Fairy's to clamber up and perch herself on the big woman's shoulder, and the good-natured giantess assisted her with sundry pushings and pullings.

"That's jist it, is it? Well thin yez naden't

be afther tellin' me anny more. Yez can kape the rist of yer importance to yersilves. If we can shtay up here, me and Tessie, we'll wurruk our finger ends off fer ye, wid no wages but a bite an' a sup."

"No, that won't do, Kathleen. Now just listen; we want to engage you as cook, and Tessie as waitress for the Dorrance Domain. It has become a hotel,—a regular summer hotel, and the boarders will arrive to-morrow."

"For the love of all the saints, miss! Is it boorders yez'll be afther takin'? Shure, an' that's foine. And it's Kathleen as 'll cook fer yez. An' Tessie, you young rascal, see to it that you wait on the table jist grand! Do there be manny a-comin', miss?"

"Two," replied Dorothy; "and they're lovely people."

"Yes, lovely people," cried Fairy, who, still on Kathleen's shoulder, was emphasizing her remarks by pounding Kathleen with her little fists; "one is a great, big, lovely gentleman, with big, blue eyes, and grayish-blackish hair. That's Mr. Faulkner. And his

wife's a beautiful little lady, who smiles, and smiles, and smiles. Oh, they're scrumptious people, and I expect they will stay all summer. Oh, Dorothy, the twins are coming! let's go and tell them!"

Fairy sprang from Kathleen's shoulder to the table, and from there bounded to the floor, and grasping Dorothy's hand, the two ran away to tell the news, and met the twins on the veranda.

Lilian and Leicester were as glad as the rest to learn of the advent of the Faulkners, and at once began to make plans for the comfort and entertainment of their boarders.

"I shall take Mr. Faulkner out fishing," said Leicester, "and show him all the best spots to fish."

"I don't believe he'll care much for fishing," said Mrs. Dorrance. "He seems to me to be so interested in his scientific work, that I imagine he spends little time in recreation. I think that you'll all have to try to be a little quieter than usual, especially in the house."

"We will, granny dear," said Lilian; "if

we're going to keep boarders, we're going to do it properly; I guess the Dorrances know when they can cut up jinks, and when they can't."

"Isn't it funny, though," said Leicester, "to think of our living in this hotel because nobody would rent it *as* a hotel, and now here we are, running a hotel ourselves. I'm going to get out the big register, and clean up that inkstand thing, and have the office all in working-order for them to register when they come to-morrow. Dorothy, you can be proprietor, but I'll be the clerk; and then after they register, I'll ring the bell for a bell-boy. And then I'll be the bell-boy. And then I'll send myself for a porter, and Mr. Hickox 'll be the porter. Oh, it 'll be great!"

"Shall we eat in the big dining-room?" asked Lilian. "It seems as if it would be more like a hotel."

"I don't know," said grandma; "that immense room is too large for seven people. The Faulkners seem very congenial, and I can't help thinking they would prefer to sit at the round table with us. However, they

might prefer a table to themselves; so I think the best plan is to wait until they arrive, and ask them. In such matters we should be glad to meet their wishes."

"I shall keep most systematic accounts," said Dorothy; "and then I can tell just how much we make by having boarders. There are lots of blank books in the office, and I shall keep exact lists of everything I buy this week, and then see how it balances up at the end of seven days."

"If you expect to make any money out of this scheme," said Leicester, "you mustn't feed us all on the fat of the land, as you did when those people were visiting here."

"No," said grandma; "you can't do it, Dorothy. It is very pleasant to set dainty and tempting dishes before one's guests; but when it comes to a practical business arrangement it is necessary to be careful in such matters. I don't want you to be over-economical, but on the other hand you cannot afford to be extravagant."

"If you're going to be a boarding-house

keeper, Dot," said Lilian, "you must set a table exactly like Mrs. Cooper's!"

At this speech, Leicester started the famous Dorrance groan, and its wails reached the ears of Mr. Hickox, who was sauntering near by in his aimless, wandering fashion.

"Thought I'd just come over and see what you're yowling about," he said pleasantly; "those screeches are enough to kill all the fish in the lake!"

"Come in, Mr. Hickox," cried Leicester; "we have a grand plan on hand, and as usual we shall want your help."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Hickox, "as usual. Hickox'll make it all right. What's up now?"

"We expect boarders to-morrow; and when they come, we want you to be on hand to look after their trunks and things. The Dorrance Domain has suddenly turned back into a hotel. Dorothy is proprietor, I'm clerk, and you're to be the porter."

"What am I?" said Lilian; "I want a regular position."

"Oh, you can be the elevator boy, or the

carriage-door opener, whichever you like," said her brother.

"As we haven't any elevator, and our carriage hasn't any door, I won't be overworked."

"We girls will all have to be upper servants," said Dorothy; "with so much extra work in the kitchen, we'll have to help a great deal as parlor-maids, and chambermaids, and dining-room maids."

"I'll sweep all the verandas every day," announced Fairy; "I do just love to fly around with that funny big broom-brush."

"Well, Hickox is yours to command," declared that genial gentleman; "whatever you want Hickory Hickox to do, that's as good as done! Excepting, of course, such various times as I might be otherwise employed. But I'll be porter all right, and I'll port them people's trunks right up to their rooms so fast, they'll think I'm an elevator. My! Mrs. Hickox, she'll be surprised to hear you people are going to have boarders! I must say, I'm some surprised myself. Well I must shuffle along now, and I'll be on deck when you want

me to-morrow. Hickox will look after things. It'll be all right."

After the ungainly figure had shuffled away, the children still continued to make plans and offer suggestions for the new arrangement.

"We must be very methodical," said Dorothy, who was much in earnest in the matter, and who wanted to start out just right. "Mrs. Faulkner is so nice and sweet, I want to please her; and, too, if the Dorrances run a hotel, I want it to be run on the most approved plan."

"We'll each have an account book," said Fairy; "and I'll put down in mine, how many times I sweep the verandas each day."

"If you get around them all in one day, baby," said Leicester, "you'll do mighty well; and to do that, you'll have to get to work at daybreak and stick to it till sundown. There's an awful big number of square feet of veranda attached to this palatial mansion, I can tell you."

"Oh, pooh!" cried Fairy. "It won't take me all day, at all. I can fly around it in a minute. I'll work like a centripepede!"

"We'll keep the horse for this week, anyway," went on Dorothy; "for I shall have to go to market every morning, and it's so much quicker to go in the carriage than the boat. Sometimes you can go for me, Less, if I make out an exact list of what I want."

"All right," said her brother; "I don't think this keeping boarders is going to be such hard work after all. I wonder we didn't think of it sooner."

"I'm glad we didn't," said Dorothy; "I think it was nicer to have a few weeks all by ourselves, first. We've got to behave when the Faulkners get here. It will be just like it was at Mrs. Cooper's, you know."

This time Fairy started the groan, and again they all chimed in with those deep growling wails that always made Mrs. Dorrance clap her hands to her ears.

"For pity's sake!" exclaimed the long-suffering old lady; "don't make any reference to Mrs. Cooper while the Faulkners are here; for if they heard those fearful groans of yours, they'd leave at once."

"What's Mr. Faulkner like?" asked

Leicester; "will he say, 'well, my little man,' to me?"

"No," said Dorothy, laughing at the remembrance; "Mr. Faulkner is an awful nice man. Not very young, and not very old."

"Like Jack Sprat's pig?" asked Leicester; "not very little and not very big."

"He isn't like anybody's pig!" said Fairy, indignantly. "He's a gentiliferous gentleman. I'm going to ask him to go to Mrs. Hickox's with me. He's scientiferic, and I know he'd like to read her newspaper clippings."

"I wouldn't ask him to go just at first, Fairy," said grandma; "wait until you get better acquainted."

"Well, anyhow, I'll take him to see the rabbits; he's sure to love them, they're such cunning, pudgy-wudgy little things."

"And I'm sure he will like Dare," said Lilian, patting the head of the big dog who lay at her feet.

"Such nice people as they seem to be, will surely like animals," said grandma; "but if they should not, then you must be very careful that they are not annoyed by them. Dare

will learn for himself whether he is liked or not; but if Mrs. Faulkner doesn't care for kittens you must keep Mike out from under foot."

"I don't believe she'll care for kittens, so I'll take this one and drown it now," said Leicester, picking up the ball of fluffy Maltese fur, and starting towards the lake.

Fairy ran after him, screaming in pretended anguish, though she well knew her brother was only joking, being almost as fond of the kitten as she was herself.

The other two girls followed, and Dare followed them, and a general game of romps ensued.

Grandma Dorrance watched them from the veranda, feeling glad for the thousandth time that her dear ones were in their own home, where they could follow their own sweet will, without causing annoyance to any one.

CHAPTER XVII

REGISTERED GUESTS

THE next day, true to her word, Dorothy made preparations for methodical and systematic hotel management.

"They may not stay more than a week; probably they won't," she said; "but I don't want them to leave because the Dorrance Domain isn't run properly as a summer hotel."

The children had looked upon the whole affair as a great joke; but seeing that there was a certain underlying current of seriousness in Dorothy's attitude, they began to think that it was a business venture after all.

"Shall we really ask them to register, Dot?" inquired Leicester, who didn't know quite how far the playing at hotel was to be carried.

"Yes," said Dorothy; "there is no reason

why not; it can certainly do no harm, and it makes everything seem more shipshape. Have nice fresh pens, ink and blotters, and put down the date and the number of their rooms when Mr. Faulkner signs. Don't laugh about it, but don't put on airs either; just be polite and businesslike."

"My, Dot, but you're a wonder!" exclaimed Leicester, looking at his sister with admiration. "Where did you learn all these things? Nobody ever registered at Mrs. Cooper's."

"No," said Dorothy; "but that was a city boarding-house; an altogether different affair from a country summer hotel. It may be foolish, but I want to try to treat the Faulkners just as they would be treated in any nice summer hotel."

"It isn't foolish at all," spoke up Lilian; "it's just the right way to do, and we'll all help. We must send a pitcher of ice-water to their room every night."

"Oh, dear, I never thought of that!" exclaimed Dorothy, in dismay; "why, we haven't any ice."

"No," said Leicester, "but fresh-drawn

water from that deep well is just as cold as any ice-water. I'll make that one of my duties; I'm a bell-boy, you know."

"Another thing," went on Lilian, in her practical way, "is the mail-box in the office. We must tell the Faulkners to put their letters in there, and they will be collected twice a day, and taken over to Woodville and mailed."

"Lilian, you're a trump!" cried Dorothy; "tell us more things like that,—that's just what I mean. But we can't go to Woodville twice a day!"

"I think once a day will be enough," said Leicester; "we'll take the contents of the mail-box every morning when we go over for the marketing."

"I shall write to Gladys Miller every day," said Fairy; "so you'll always have something to take; maybe the Faulkners don't have so very much corresponderence."

All four of the children went to market that morning. Leicester drove them over, and so much chattering and planning did they do on the way, that the two miles distance seemed very short.

Dorothy felt the responsibility of ordering just the right things for her table. She realized that she must begin on just the same scale on which she expected to continue through the week. She must not be too lavish, for since her aim now was to earn money, she must be fair and just, rather than generous.

Always sensible and capable, Dorothy seemed suddenly possessed of a new sort of self-reliance; and the responsibility which she had voluntarily and gladly accepted, seemed to bring with it the executive ability which promised success.

Mr. Bill Hodges was delighted to hear the news of boarders at the Dorrance Domain. He possessed that trait, not altogether unusual in storekeepers, of desiring to sell his wares. During the fortnight that the Dorrances had entertained company, he had reaped a golden harvest, and, as since then Dorothy's demand on his stock had been much more modest, he now rejoiced in the anticipation of further extravagant orders.

He was greatly surprised then, when Dorothy, instead of lavishly purchasing whatever

struck her fancy, regardless of its price, began to inquire the cost of things, and showed a decided leaning towards thrift and economy.

"Ain't goin' to starve them folks, be you?" he asked, as Dorothy hesitated between the relative merits of lettuce and tomatoes.

"I hope not," said Dorothy, politely, for she knew Mr. Bill Hodges pretty well by this time, and so did not resent what she knew was not meant as a rudeness. "When our house was last run as a hotel, did they buy their provisions from you?"

"Yes, ma'am, they did;" and a shade more of respectful deference crept into the voice and manner of Mr. Bill Hodges, as he instinctively realized the touch of added dignity in Dorothy's demeanor. "Mr. Perkins, he used to do the marketin', and gracious snakes! but he calc'lated close. He give his boarders just enough to keep them alive and no more."

"Well, I don't want to be quite so mean as that," said Dorothy; "but on the other hand, I can't afford to treat my boarders quite as I would like to entertain my guests."

"That's right, that's right!" exclaimed Mr. Bill Hodges, whose own shrewd business mind readily recognized similar qualities in another. "That's right; treat 'em good, but not too good."

This phrase fastened itself in Dorothy's mind, and she determined to take for her line of action all that was expressed in Mr. Bill Hodges' homely phrase, "Treat 'em good, but not too good."

Their purchases satisfactorily completed, the children jogged back home over the rough, steep hill, and even old Dobbin seemed to realize that he was now part of the establishment of a first-class summer hotel.

That afternoon the Faulkners arrived.

Everything was in readiness, and perhaps no hotel proprietor ever took greater pride in the general appearance of his hostelry, than did Dorothy Dorrance, as, arrayed in a fresh white muslin, she stood on the east veranda watching a lumbering stage drawing nearer and nearer to the Dorrance Domain.

And surely no typical hotel clerk, even though decorated with the traditional diamond

pin, could show a more faultless array of official-looking desk-furnishings.

The Horton House stage rolled slowly up the driveway, and stopped at the main entrance. Mr. Hickox was on hand to open the stage door, and look after the hand luggage.

With an instinctive grasping of the situation, both Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner appreciated Dorothy's frame of mind, and acted precisely as if they were entering a hotel run on regulation lines.

As Dorothy led the way to the office, Mrs. Faulkner looked at her curiously. It was strange to see a girl, so young and pretty, so graceful and well-bred, yet possessed of a certain quality which could only be designated by the term, "business instinct." She marveled at Dorothy's poise, which, however, showed no trace of awkwardness or pertness.

Mrs. Faulkner was fond of character study, and felt convinced at once that she would greatly enjoy a better acquaintance with Dorothy Dorrance.

At the office, Leicester showed the new-

ners the same quiet, polite courtesy. The
y had a frank, straightforward air that al-
ays impressed strangers pleasantly. He
rned the register around towards Mr.
aulkner, and offered him an already-inked
n, with an air of being quite accustomed to
gistering guests.

But Leicester's sense of humor was strong,
d the absurdity of the whole thing struck
m so forcibly, that it was with great diffi-
lty he refrained from laughing outright.
d he glanced at Dorothy, he certainly
ould have done so; but the two were fully
termined to play their part properly, and
ey succeeded.

Nor was Mr. Faulkner to be outdone in the
atter of correct deportment. He gravely
ok the pen offered to him, signed the regis-
in the place indicated, and inquired if
ey might go at once to their rooms.

"Certainly," said Leicester, touching the
on the desk. The ubiquitous Hickox
peared with the hand-bags, and Leicester
nded him the keys.

This touch nearly finished Dorothy, for

numbered keys seemed so very like a real hotel, that it struck her as quite the funniest thing yet.

As the Faulkners, following Mr. Hickox, went up the great staircase and disappeared around the corner, Leicester flew out from behind his desk, grasped Dorothy's hand, and fleetly, though silently, the two ran through the long parlor to one of the smaller rooms, shut the door, and then burst into peals of laughter.

For a moment they would pause, begin to speak to each other, and then go off again into choking spasms of hilarity.

Had they only known it, their two guests on the floor above, were doing almost the same thing. Mrs. Faulkner had thrown herself into an easy chair, and was laughing until the tears rolled down her cheeks. Mr. Faulkner, who was by nature a grave gentleman, was walking up and down the room, broadly smiling, and saying, "Well upon my word! well upon my word!"

Before Dorothy and Leicester had recovered their equilibrium, the two younger girls came rushing into the room where they were.

"Did they come? Are they here? What is the matter? Do tell us all about it!"

Dorothy, in her idea of the fitness of things had asked Lilian and Fairy to keep out of sight until after the arrival and registration had been safely accomplished; grandma, it had also been thought best, was not to appear until dinner-time. As Dorothy had expressed it, she knew the proper propriety for a proprietor, and she proposed to live up to it.

But of course when Fairy and Lilian, on the west veranda, heard the commotion in the small parlor, they could restrain their curiosity no longer, and insisted on being told all about it.

So Dorothy and Leicester calmed down a little, and assured them that the whole thing had passed off beautifully; that the arrival had been a howling success, and that Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner were now established boarders at the Dorrance Domain.

Then Dorothy went out to the kitchen to superintend carefully the preparations for dinner. She had decided that since the Dorrance Domain had become a hotel, it was

proper to have dinner at night, and luncheon in the middle of the day.

Once over the comical farce of registering, the advent of the Faulkners took on an aspect not entirely humorous, and Dorothy's sense of serious responsibility came back to her. Kathleen, too, with her native Irish wit realized the gravity of the occasion, and went about her duties in a steady, capable way that greatly helped to reassure Dorothy.

And indeed, matters seemed to be progressing most smoothly. The dinner was well under way, and the table daintily set.

Fairy had brought flowers from Mrs. Hickox's garden, and she and Lilian had decorated the table and the dining-room. Dorothy had concluded that they would all sit together at the round table that night, and then if the Faulkners preferred a table to themselves, it could be arranged later.

After a careful supervision, Dorothy left the dinner in charge of her really competent cook and waitress, and went back to the family. She found them all on the west veranda, where they usually congregated at sunset time.

With them were the Faulkners; and in a pretty summer house-gown, Mrs. Faulkner looked so sweet and dainty, that Dorothy felt more than ever attracted to her. Mr. Faulkner was engaged in a pleasant conversation with Grandma Dorrance; and Dorothy suddenly felt that to be the proprietor of a summer hotel was just the nicest thing a girl could do.

"You've no idea," Mrs. Faulkner was saying, as Dorothy came out, "what a delightful change this is from the noise and glitter of the Horton House. This lovely great veranda, and the beautiful view of the lake, with no inharmonious elements, makes me feel glad I'm alive."

"I'm glad you are alive, too," said Dorothy, smiling at the lady; "and I'm glad you live here."

CHAPTER XVIII

AMBITIONS

IT was truly astonishing, even to Dorothy, how easily the machinery of a big hotel could be made to move along. The Dorrances all agreed that the Faulkners were no trouble at all, and that their presence in the Dorrance Domain added greatly to the happiness of all concerned. Doubtless the explanation of this lay in several different facts. To begin with, the Faulkners were most charming people; refined, tactful, and kind-hearted. It was their nature to make as little trouble as possible, wherever they might be.

On the other side, Dorothy's determination to succeed in her enterprise, grew with what it fed upon, and she became day by day more capable through experience. Also, she was ably assisted by Leicester and the girls, who were always ready to do anything she wished

them to. Then, the servants were certainly treasures, and as Dorothy said, it would be a perfect idiot of a hotel proprietor who couldn't succeed under such advantages as she had.

With her success her ambitions grew.

Again sitting on the east veranda, one afternoon, she found herself wishing that another buggy would drive up and deposit two more such people as the Faulkners at her hotel office. If she could succeed with two, why not with four, or even six?

Indeed, in her imagination she saw a long procession of buggies bringing eager guests to the hospitality of the Dorrance Domain.

Acting on an impulse, she went in search of Mrs. Faulkner, and found that lady just coming down-stairs, dressed for afternoon, and quite ready for a chat.

So Dorothy carried her off to one of her favorite nooks which was a little vine-clad arbor on the east lawn.

This proprietor and guest had become firm friends in the few days they had been together. Dorothy admired Mrs. Faulkner's lovely gracious disposition, and her clever cultivated

mind. Mrs. Faulkner saw great possibilities in Dorothy's character and took a sincere interest in the girl. Aside from this there was that subtle, inexplicable bond of sympathetic congeniality, which makes a real friendship possible.

"I want to talk to you seriously," said Dorothy.

"I'm all attention," said Mrs. Faulkner; "proceed with your seriousness."

"You and Mr. Faulkner have been here a week to-morrow," Dorothy went on, "and——"

"And you can't stand us any longer,—and you want to break it to me gently?"

"No, indeed, nothing of the sort! and you know that well. But I want to ask you frankly, and I want you to tell me honestly, how I have succeeded this week in what I have undertaken."

"What have you undertaken?" said Mrs. Faulkner, who dearly loved to make Dorothy formulate her thoughts.

"Why, I undertook to give you and Mr. Faulkner, in a general way, and so far as I

could, just such comforts and accommodations as you would get at the average summer hotel."

"Is that all you tried to do?"

"I think," said Dorothy, speaking slowly, and thinking hard, "I think I tried to give you a little bit extra, in the way of home comforts and dainty service, to make up for the things that the average summer hotel provides, but which I can't give you."

"Like a brass band, for instance."

"Yes, a brass band, and a great array of bell-boys and porters, and Saturday night hops, and,—lots of things like that."

"Well," said Mrs. Faulkner, "to tell you the truth, I don't care two straws for brass bands, or Saturday night hops; and Mr. Faulkner doesn't either. We are both charmed with this place, and we are both absolutely happy and comfortable. So, if you are willing, we are quite ready to prolong our stay indefinitely. Mr. Faulkner enjoys the quiet and freedom from interruption, while he is pursuing his scientific studies. And as for myself, I want to get well rested this summer, for dur-

ing the winter, my city life is very full of gayety and excitement."

"I'm so glad you are satisfied," said Dorothy, earnestly; "for this was an experiment, and I was so anxious it should succeed. Of course, on my side it is more than satisfactory. You and Mr. Faulkner are ideal boarders; you make no trouble at all, and you have helped me in lots of ways by your advice and suggestions. Now I want to ask your advice some more. You know what I can do,—you know the house, and all,—do you think, if I could get them, I could take two or three more boarders?"

"Do *you* think you could?" asked Mrs. Faulkner, smiling at Dorothy's eager face.

"Yes, I think so; but sometimes, you know, I'm apt to overrate my own ability. I could do the work all right,—or have it done,—but I'm not sure whether I could manage to satisfy people who might not be so lovely and amiable as you and Mr. Faulkner are. And another thing, I wouldn't want any more boarders if it would bother or annoy you two the least mite."

"Why do you think you would like to have more?"

"Because, Mrs. Faulkner, I want to earn more money. Grandmother is bothered with her financial affairs, and if we children could help her any, we'd all be so glad. You see we are an awful expense to her; but soon, I hope we'll be old enough to earn money for her instead. Now of course to have two boarders is a good help towards the living expenses of our own family; and I've counted up, and I think if I could have four, it would almost entirely pay our running account. And if I had six, I think we might begin to save money. Oh, Mrs. Faulkner, do you think we could do it?"

"Where would you get these boarders?"

"I don't know; but I thought I would ask you first, and see if you objected to having other people here. And then, if you didn't, I thought perhaps I'd write to some of my friends in the city, and see if any of them wanted to come up for a few weeks."

"You are a brave little girl, Dorothy," said Mrs. Faulkner, looking into the eager anxious

eyes upturned to hers; "and I must tell you how much I appreciate your love for your grandmother, and your courage and pluck in taking up this burden of the family fortunes. I have watched you through the week, and I have noticed your many little self-denials and your unfailing patience and perseverance. *I* know who walked over to Woodport and back yesterday in the hot sun, in order that I might have cream for my peaches last night at dinner."

"Oh, how did you know?" cried Dorothy, blushing at her friend's praise; "but there was really nobody to send,—the children had been on several errands,—and so I just went myself."

"Yes, I know it; and that is only one instance that shows your determination to have things right. And with that plucky perseverance of yours, and with your pleasant house, and good helpers, I see no reason why you shouldn't take a few more boarders if you can get the right kind. Of course it wouldn't annoy Mr. Faulkner nor myself to have some other people here; and even if it did, we

would have no right or wish to stand in your way. When you reach the stage of brass bands, and Saturday hops, that will be time for us to leave you, and push on into the wilderness."

"You needn't begin to pack your things today," said Dorothy, smiling, "as it isn't at all likely I can persuade anybody to come,—let alone a brass band."

"Suppose I present you with two more guests," said Mrs. Faulkner.

"Oh," cried Dorothy, "do you know of anybody? Who are they?"

"You may not like them altogether. They are two ladies who are now over at the Horton House. They are not enjoying it there, and they asked me to let them know if I found any place which I thought they would like. I'm sure they would like it here, and I know they would be glad to come; but, to be honest about it, they are a little fussy in some ways. They are spinsters, from Boston, and though they are refined and well-bred ladies, they are sometimes a little exacting in their requirements."

"I wouldn't mind what their requirements were, if I could meet them to their satisfaction."

"You mustn't take that stand too strictly, Dorothy dear; it is well to try to give your guests satisfaction, but some requirements are unreasonable, and it is a mistake to grant them. If these ladies come, you must exercise your judgment in your treatment of them, for they're the kind who are quite likely to impose on your good nature."

"Do you think they would come? How can I find out about them?"

"Yes, I'm sure they would come; and if you wish me to, I will write to them."

"Oh, thank you; I wish you would, please; that is, after I have spoken to grandma, and to the other children about it. What are their names?"

"Van Arsdale. Miss Marcia and Miss Amanda. They are quite as imposing as their names sound; but you need not be really afraid of them. Remember the Faulkners will always protect you from their ferocity."

Dorothy laughed; and kissing her good

friend, ran away to find the other children. Having gathered them together, they all went up to Grandma Dorrance's room for a caucus.

"It's a new plan!" exclaimed Dorothy, perching herself on grandma's bureau. As a rule, the more excited the Dorrances were, the higher seats they selected. At present the twins were sitting on the headboard of the bed, and Fairy was making unsuccessful endeavors to climb up on the mantelpiece.

Grandma Dorrance, well accustomed to these gymnastics, sat in her easy chair, and placidly awaited Dorothy's further announcement.

"You see," Dorothy went on, "we've made, and we are making a great success of our boarders. I've just had a talk with Mrs. Faulkner and she's quite satisfied; and goodness knows *we* are."

"Yes," said Fairy, from a heap of sofa-pillows into which she had just tumbled, "I do think they are the loveliest people. Why, Mr. Faulkner says he's going to send to New York for a book, a-purpose for me. It's a lovely book, all about bugs and slugs and ear-

wigs. We went walking yesterday, and he showed me the funny little houses where beetles and things live in. Oh, he *is* a nice man!"

"Yes," said Dorothy, starting afresh; "it's a great success all around; and therefore, my beloved brethren, this is my plan. If two boarders are good, four boarders are twice as good; and so, what do you think of taking two more guests into our hotel?"

"At the same rates?" asked Lilian.

"Yes," said Dorothy, "at the same rates. Just think! that will give us sixty dollars a week income, and it won't cost us much more than that to live, even with four boarders."

"Hooray!" cried Leicester, flinging a pillow up in the air, and catching it on his head, "hooray for the great financier! proprietor of the Dorrance Domain!"

This was followed by a series of ear-splitting cheers; a performance in which the Dorrances had indulged but seldom during the past week; but just now the occasion really seemed to demand it.

"Who are your millionaire friends?" asked Leicester, "and when do they arrive?"

"Oh, they don't know yet themselves, that they're coming," said Dorothy, airily; "and they're two ladies, and their name is Van Arsdale, and they're very aristocratic, and they want to be waited on every minute, and I'm sure they won't want any of us to make a speck of noise while they're here."

A long low growl from Lilian, started the Dorrance groan, and the other three joined in with such force and energy, that the next day Mr. Faulkner inquired privately of grandma the meaning of the fearful sounds he had heard the day before.

When they were quiet again, Dorothy explained the whole thing rationally, and they were all much pleased with her plan.

Grandma feared that the added responsibility would be too much for her oldest granddaughter; but the rest all promised to help, and the girls agreed that they could do even more of the parlor and dining-room work, and so give Tessie more time to help Kathleen in the kitchen.

"I suppose the Van Arsdale ladies will register," said Leicester, with a sudden remembrance of his last experience as a clerk.

"Yes, of course," said Dorothy; "and we mustn't giggle this time, either. I'm not at all sure they'll come, but I hope they will; and of course, if they do they must be received properly."

CHAPTER XIX

THE VAN ARSDALE LADIES

THE Van Arsdale ladies did decide to come. On the receipt of Mrs. Faulkner's note they concluded that the Dorrance Domain was just the place for them, and they immediately began to make preparations for leaving the Horton House.

"Though it's a very queer thing, Amanda," the elder Miss Van Arsdale said to her sister, "it's a very queer thing for a young girl to be proprietor of a hotel. I must confess I don't understand it. And I'm not sure I want to be mixed up with any such ridiculous doings."

"But Mrs. Faulkner says that it's all right; and that we four will be the only boarders. That seems to me very exclusive. You know the Faulkners are all right,—her mother was a Frelinghuysen. I'm not afraid to risk it, as long as they recommend it."

"Well, we'll try it for a week, as Mrs. Faulkner advised; and if we don't like the girl proprietor, we won't have to stay any longer."

"I don't know what she can be, I'm sure. She can't be of our kind."

Judging from the effect presented to the eye, the Van Arsdale ladies and Dorothy Dorrance were not of the same kind.

They were both elderly spinsters of the type that looks older than it really is, yet tries to seem younger. They were tall and spare with high cheek bones, and aquiline, aristocratic noses. These noses seemed to turn up at everything; and though literally they didn't turn up at all, yet the effect of turning up was always there. Their large, light blue eyes were capable of a powerful and penetrating gaze, that was apt to be extremely disconcerting to the object of their stare. Both ladies had really beautiful hair of a soft, gray color, which they wore rolled over high pompadours. They were wealthy, and though economical and even penurious in some respects, each possessed an inordinate love of

dress, and was willing to spend large sums for gorgeous fabrics made up in the latest styles. The incongruity of these middle aged and far from beautiful spinsters, trailing around soft exquisite robes of dainty coloring, and exquisitely made, afforded much scope for wonderment and curiosity wherever they went.

But the sisters cared little or nothing for the comments passed upon them. They bought their clothes, and wore them, purely for their own selfish enjoyment; and met with stares of cold contempt, the half-sarcastic praises offered by some daring ladies at the hotel.

The day that the Van Arsdales were expected at the Dorrance Domain, Dorothy and Leicester were prepared to receive them as they had the others. Lilian and Fairy were allowed to witness the performance this time, on the strict conditions that they were not to laugh, and none of the four were to look at each other.

And so when the Horton House stage came over for the second time, Grandma Dorrance, the three Dorrance girls, and the two Faulk-

ners were on the veranda, while Leicester stood nobly at his post in the office.

Mr. Hickox appeared duly, and made everything all right as usual. But when he assisted the Van Arsdale ladies out of the stage, he remarked to himself that his wife would certainly be surprised if she could see them dresses.

The elder Miss Van Arsdale wore a silk of the exquisite shade known as pastel blue; it was made with a jaunty little jacket, opening over an elaborate white lace waist. A long gold chain hung around her neck, from which depended innumerable lockets, charms, pencils, purses and vinaigrettes, in a bewildering array. Her blue hat was decked with white ostrich plumes, and though Dorothy had been prepared by Mrs. Faulkner for this display, yet she had not expected quite such a gorgeous spectacle.

Miss Amanda Van Arsdale followed her sister; she wore a liberty silk gown of an old rose color, and a hat with long black ostrich feathers. She wore no necklace, but from her belt was suspended a large square bag made

entirely of overlapping plates of gold, in which doubtless she carried the various impedimenta that her sister exhibited.

Though over-elaborate, these costumes were made in the latest fashion, and they looked like beautiful and costly gowns, which by some absurd mistake had been put on the wrong wearers.

The two advanced with a haughty and somewhat supercilious air, and Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner rose to greet them. Introductions to the Dorrances followed, and then Miss Van Arsdale raised her *lorgnon*, and treated Dorothy to a prolonged inspection.

"And you are the proprietor of this hotel?" she said.

"Yes," said Dorothy, smiling; "I am."

"Well," said Miss Van Arsdale, "you can't fool me. You look to me quite capable of being the proprietor of anything."

And somehow, in spite of her peculiar appearance and her brusque ways, Dorothy felt at once a decided liking for Miss Marcia Van Arsdale.

Mrs. Faulkner gave a little nod of satisfac-

tion as she saw the good understanding between these two, and Mr. Faulkner said, genially:

"Yes, we think our proprietor a very capable young woman."

Then Dorothy ushered the ladies in to the office and paused at the desk.

Leicester confessed afterwards that he almost fell off his stool when he saw Dorothy bringing in two Birds of Paradise, with their feathers freshly painted. But at the time he preserved a straight face, and politely offered the register and the pen.

Miss Marcia, in a bold, dashing hand, signed for them both, and then Dorothy went herself to their rooms with them,—the faithful Hickox bringing up the rear.

On reaching the rooms, Dorothy offered to assist the ladies in removing their hats and veils, but Miss Marcia only stared at her. "Send me a maid," she said; "a lady's maid."

Then Dorothy, who was acting under Mrs. Faulkner's direction, said quietly:

"Miss Van Arsdale, this is not a fully equipped hotel, and we do not have ladies'

maids. The chambermaid, Tessie, will attend to your rooms, and such outside service as you may require. Also, my sisters and I will be glad to help you occasionally, as we often help one another. But a regular ladies' maid to assist at your toilet, we cannot provide. May I help you unpin your veil?"

Miss Marcia Van Arsdale looked at Dorothy again through her glasses.

"You're the right sort," she said, "and I like your plain speaking. I'm plain-spoken myself. We'll get along all right, and I shall send for my parrot."

"Oh," exclaimed Dorothy, "have you a parrot?"

"Yes, a very beautiful and valuable bird. But I never take her anywhere, until I know just what sort of a place it's going to be. I shall send for her to-morrow."

Not knowing the high esteem in which Miss Van Arsdale held her parrot, Dorothy did not fully appreciate the magnitude of this compliment. So she merely said, "We shall be very glad to welcome Polly."

"I do not allow her to be called Polly,"

said Miss Van Arsdale, with a sudden return to her supercilious manner. "My bird's name is Mary,—and I strongly disapprove of nicknames of any sort."

A parrot named Mary struck Dorothy as very funny, but she was learning to control her sense of humor when necessary, and she replied: "Very well, Miss Van Arsdale, we shall be glad to welcome Mary."

"Thank you," said Miss Van Arsdale, formally; "and I will ask you to have her cage moved about at my direction, during the day, in accordance with the sun and the weather."

Dorothy considered a minute, and concluded that this was one of the times to humor Miss Van Arsdale.

So she said, "I will see to it that the cage is placed wherever you desire."

The repetition of this conversation to the others caused great hilarity.

"Mary!" cried Leicester; "a parrot called Mary! but *I* should not dare be so familiar with the bird as to call her Mary. I shall say Miss Mary, and shall always address her with my best dancing-school bow."

The parrot arrived duly, and proved to be such a superior bird, and so interesting and attractive, that the children all fell in love with her. The name of Polly was entirely unsuited to such a dignified creature, and Mary seemed far more appropriate.

The bird's plumage was of brilliant coloring, and Lilian declared that the Van Arsdale ladies copied their own clothes from Miss Mary's. The parrot was an exceedingly fine talker, and readily picked up new phrases.

Whenever the Van Arsdale ladies entered the room, Mary would remark, "Hurrah for Miss Marcia!" or, "Hurrah for Miss Amanda!" as the case might be. This hurrahing was quite in line with the Dorrances' own mode of expression, and they soon taught Mary to hurrah for each of them by name.

Although on the whole, the Misses Van Arsdale were satisfactory boarders, they were far more difficult than the easy-going Faulkners. Miss Marcia had a most irritating way of popping out of her room, and calling over the banister, "Clerk, clerk!"

Since the moment of registration, she had looked upon Leicester as the official clerk of the hotel, and applied to him a dozen times a day for things that she wanted or thought she wanted.

Usually these applications were made by screaming from the head of the staircase. Sometimes the request was for stationery,—again for hot water, warm water, cold water, or ice water. Miss Amanda, too, made similar demands, and was given to calling for a glass of milk at five o'clock in the morning, or a few sandwiches after everybody had retired for the night.

But Dorothy was learning that the way to success is not always a primrose path, and she cheerfully did her best to accede to such of these demands as she considered just and reasonable. And she tried, too, to look at the justice and reasonableness from the standpoint of her guests' rather than her own opinions.

The children had agreed that whenever Miss Marcia desired Mary's cage moved, any one of the four was to do it. And it was

fortunate that the task was thus divided, for Miss Marcia was fussy, and twenty times a day, or more, one of the Dorrances might be seen carrying the large cage from the hall to the veranda, from the veranda to the parlor, from the parlor to the upper balcony, and so on.

But as careful attention to Mary's welfare was one of the principal conditions of the Van Arsdales' continued stay at the Dorrance Domain, and too, as the children were one and all devoted to the bird, this work was not objected to.

Dorothy was most anxious to keep her four boarders through the rest of the summer. For the plan was working successfully, and though providing a well-spread and even bounteous table, Dorothy found she could save a little money. She was not avaricious nor mercenary, but she longed to be able, at the close of the season, to present Grandma Dorrance with at least a small sum of money, to help pay their winter expenses.

And so, when Miss Marcia one day made a

proposition to her, Dorothy hailed it with delight.

The suggestion was that Miss Van Arsdale should ask her niece to come up to the Dorrance Domain to board, and to bring her whole family.

The family consisted of Mrs. Black, three small children and two nurses; Mr. Black might possibly come up occasionally, but would remain only a few days at a time.

Children! Dorothy remembered only too well, how children were objected to in boarding-houses, and she wondered if she dare undertake to have them in her hotel. She realized, too, that six or seven more people would necessitate some radical changes in her methods, and in her household appointments. Indeed, it meant a change from an experiment to the real thing. It meant assuming obligations much more formal than she was under towards her present guests.

On the other hand, Mrs. Black was wealthy, Miss Van Arsdale said, and quite willing to pay generously for all she received.

"I want to do it, Miss Marcia," said Doro-

thy,—"I want to do it very much; but it is a big question to decide. So I'll take twenty-four hours to think it over, and to discuss it with the others, and to-morrow I will let you know."

CHAPTER XX

A REAL HOTEL

AT the family conference on the subject, Grandma Dorrance said No. The gentle old lady was more than usually decided, and she said, that while the Faulkners and Van Arsdales were charming people, and more like visitors than boarders, a family of children, with nurses, was an altogether different matter, and meant far more trouble and complications than Dorothy could realize.

"Oh, grannymother dear," said Dorothy, "I don't think so. Miss Marcia says that Mrs. Black is a lovely lady, not a bit fussy; and children and nurses can't be as much responsibility as grown people. Why, they wouldn't be critical at all."

"Not critical, perhaps, but far more troublesome in their own way."

"Oh, I don't know," said Leicester; "the reason people didn't want us children in

boarding-houses was because we made so much noise. Now we don't care how much noise these kids make, and there's room enough for the people who do care, to get away from the racket."

"We would have to have more servants," said Lilian; "and wouldn't that cut down the profits a good deal?"

"I've been thinking about that," said Dorothy, "and I've come to this conclusion. If we should take all these people, we would have to get another chambermaid, and another helper in the kitchen. A young girl to pare the vegetables, and help with the dish washing. Of course with so many extra people, more waitresses will be necessary; but as you say, Lilian, if we hire a lot of servants it will make our profits pretty slim. And so I propose that we three girls wait on the table."

"Oh, no, children," cried Grandma Dorrance; "I won't allow anything of that sort!"

"Now wait a minute, grandma," said Dorothy; "don't say things that you'll just have to take back afterwards. There is no disgrace at all in waiting on a table. Lots of college

girls and boys do it right along, in the colleges,—and they go to summer hotels, too, and wait on the tables there. Now we children want to earn some money to help you; after you've taken care of us all these years, I'm sure it's no more than right. And if this way of earning money isn't easier and pleasanter than going into a store, I'll give up. What do the rest of you say?"

"I say, let's go ahead," declared Leicester; "if the four of us agree, we can persuade grandma. She never really refused us anything in our lives. And as to waiting on the table, I'd just as leave do it myself, as not. As you say, Dot, lots of college fellows do it, and it's no more disgrace than being president. And then we can all eat by ourselves afterwards, and have a jolly old time."

"I'd love to wait on the table," said Fairy; "I think it would be gorgeous fun. Shall we all wear caps, and aprons with big white wings sticking out of the shoulders?"

"No," said Dorothy, "not caps. We'll wear white aprons, but not with shoulder-ruffles."

"I shall have shoulder-ruffles on mine,"

said Leicester, decidedly; "and I shall wear a cap, too."

Even grandma laughed at this; but Dorothy said, "No, Less, I don't want you to wait on the table, at least not until we really need you. We girls can do it, with Tessie's help."

"Well, what *can* I do?" said Leicester; "it won't take all my time to register the people who come."

"There'll be enough for you to do, old fellow," said Dorothy; "you can go to market every day, and answer Miss Marcia's calls, and move Mary around. Then if you have any time left, you can amuse the three Black babies."

"Pickaninnies, are they?" said Leicester; "then I'll fill them up on watermelon."

Although Grandma Dorrance weakened somewhat in her disapproval of the plan, yet it was not until Mrs. Faulkner was called in, and her opinion asked, that grandma gave an entire consent.

Mrs. Faulkner was so sweet and sensible about the whole matter, and so judicious in

that it would be all right, and that he would look after things.

The rockaway came first, and Mr. and Mrs. Black were helped out by Mr. Hickox in his most official manner.

Mrs. Black was a delicate, helpless-looking little lady; very pretty, in a pale blonde way, and seemingly very dependent on her big, good-looking husband. Mr. Benjamin Black was one of those hearty, cordial-mannered men, who make friends at once.

He brought Mrs. Black up the steps, and advancing to Dorothy with outstretched hand, said pleasantly: "I'm sure this is our proprietor, Miss Dorrance."

"Yes," said Dorothy, put at her ease at once, and shaking hands with them both; "I'm very glad to see you."

"We are glad to be here," said Mr. Black. "The trip was very warm and tiresome. But this place is most charming."

"And so cool and quiet," said Mrs. Black, sinking into a chair, and looking, Dorothy thought, as if she never meant to rise again.

By this time the other vehicles were depos-

iting their cargoes, both human and freight, and for a moment Dorothy wondered if the Dorrance Domain were large enough to hold the entire collection.

One of the nurses was French, and was talking volubly in her own language to the two children who held her by the hands. One of these children, a girl of five years, was answering her nurse, also in French ; while the other, a younger boy, was crying loudly, but whether in French or English, nobody could quite make out.

The other nurse was a large and stout German woman, who was crooning a German folk-song to the baby she carried in her arm. Apparently the baby cared little for German music, for the small infant was pounding its nurse's face with both tiny fists, and making strange gurgling sounds which might be caused either by joy or grief.

All these people came up on the veranda ; and after persuading one of the drivers to stay and help him, Mr. Hickox began to carry the luggage into the house.

With a successful effort at composure, Doro-

thy paid no attention to the children and nurses, and conducted Mr. Black to the office.

"Ah," said he to Leicester; "how do you do, sir, how do you do? Fine place you have up here. Very fine place. Glad I brought my family. Hope they won't make you any trouble."

As the commotion on the veranda seemed to increase each moment, Leicester did not echo this hope, but spoke pleasantly to Mr. Black, and turned the register towards him.

The gentleman registered Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Black, Miss Sylvia Black, Master Montmorency Black, Miss Gwendolen Genevieve Black, Mlle. Celestine, and Fraülein Lisa Himmelpfennig.

Leicester looked proudly at this array of names which reached half-way down the page, and ringing for Mr. Hickox, he gave him the keys of the rooms set aside for the party, and the caravan started up-stairs.

Dorothy went with them, both because she thought it proper to do so, and because she felt an interest in seeing the family properly distributed.

Leicester left his official desk, and found plenty to do in disposing of the baby-carriages, and the other paraphernalia.

It was strange, Dorothy thought to herself as she came down-stairs, how much more easily, and as a matter of course she took the Blacks' arrival than she had the previous ones.

"I must have been born for a hotel proprietor," she said to herself; "for I don't feel any worry or anxiety about the dinner or anything. I just *know* everything will be all right."

As she reached the foot of the staircase, she met Fairy, who was just carrying Mary's cage into the north parlor.

"Hurrah for Dorothy!" croaked the parrot, catching sight of her.

"Ah, Miss Mary, you'll have a lot of new names to hurrah for now, and jaw-breakers at that. I shouldn't wonder if they'd break even a parrot's jaw, and they may bend that big yellow beak of yours."

"She can learn them," said Fairy, confidently. "Miss Mary can learn anything. She's the cleverest, smartest, educatedest bird

in the whole world. There's *nothing* she can't learn."

"Pretty Mary," said the bird in its queer, croaking voice; "move Mary's cage. Hurrah for Fairy!"

"There, just hear that!" exclaimed Fairy, proudly; "now I rather guess a bird like that could learn to hurrah for anybody."

"Well," said Dorothy, "but you don't know yet that these children's names are Gwendolen Genevieve, and Montmorency."

"What!" cried Fairy, nearly dropping the cage, "of course no parrot could learn such names as those."

"And Miss Marcia objects to nicknames," said Dorothy. "These new people aren't a bit like their aunts, though."

"When are they coming down?" asked Lilian, who had joined her sisters; "I wish they'd get that procession of baby-carriages started. I want to see the show."

At that moment, the French nurse, Celestine, came down-stairs with the two older children. The little ones had been freshly dressed, and looked extremely pretty. Sylvia

was in crisp white muslin, with fluttering bows of pink ribbon, and Montmorency wore a boyish garb of white piqué.

"Won't you speak to me?" asked Lilian, putting out her hand to the little girl.

"No," said the child, hiding her face in her nurse's apron; "do away. I's af'aid."

"Mees Sylvie,—she is afraid of everything," said Celestine; "she is a naughty—naughty,—a bad ma'amselle."

"No, no," cried Sylvia; "me not bad. Me dood ma'selle."

"Me dood!" announced three year old Montmorency; "me no ky. On'y babies ky. Me bid man!"

"You are good," said Fairy, "and you're a nice big man. Come with me, and I'll show you where I'm going to put this pretty green bird."

"Ess," said the little boy, and grasping hold of Fairy's frock he willingly trotted along by her side.

Whereupon Sylvia, overcoming her bashfulness, concluded she, too, wanted to go with the green bird.

So Celestine and her charges accompanied the Dorrance girls to the north parlor, and there they found the Van Arsdale ladies, who sat waiting in state to receive their newly arrived relatives.

CHAPTER XXI

UPS AND DOWNS

THE days that followed were crammed full of both business and pleasure. Dorothy rose each morning, buoyant with eager hope that all would go well, and went to bed each night, rejoicing in the fact that in the main it had done so.

There was plenty of work to do; but it was cheerfully done, and many hands made it light, and comparatively easy. There were many small worries and anxieties, but they were overcome by perseverance and determination.

The Dorrance pride was inherent in all four children, and having set their hand to the plough, not only were they unwilling to turn back, but they were determined to make the best possible furrow. Although Dorothy was at the helm, and all important matters were referred to her, yet the others had their

appointed tasks and did them each day, promptly and well.

Now that the Domain had assumed more of the character of a hotel, the Dorrances saw less of their boarders, socially. Also the large dining-room was used, and the guests seated in families at various tables. This gave a far more hotel-like air to the house, and though perhaps not quite as pleasant, it seemed to Dorothy the right thing to do.

The Faulkners were ideal boarders; the Van Arsdales, though more exacting, were just and considerate; but the Blacks, as Leicester expressed it, were a caution.

Mrs. Black was a continual and never-pausing fusser. Mr. Black remained two days to get them settled, and then returned to the city. Immediately after his departure, Mrs. Black insisted on changing her room.

"I didn't want to bother my husband about it," she said to Dorothy, "for he thinks I'm so fickle-minded; but truly, it isn't that. You see, the sun gets around to this room at just half-past three, and that's the time I'm always taking my nap, and so of course it

wakes me up. Now you see, I can't stand that,—when I came up here for rest and recuperation. And so, my dear Miss Dorrance, if you don't mind, I'll just take some other room. I'm sure you have plenty of them, and if that big, strong Mr. Hickox will help move my things, I'm sure it will be no trouble at all. Perhaps your sister Fairy will look after the children a little bit, while Celestine and Lisa assist me. The baby is asleep, and perhaps she won't waken, but if she does, would Miss Lilian mind holding her for just a little while? or she might take her out in her baby-carriage for a bit of a ride. I'm sorry to be troublesome, but you see for yourself, I really can't help it."

If Mrs. Black really *was* sorry to be troublesome, she must have been sorry most of the time. For she was everlastingly making changes of some sort, or desiring attention from somebody, and she quite imposed on the good nature of the younger Dorrances, by begging them to take care of her children upon all too frequent occasions. Once, even Leicester was surprised to find himself wheeling Montmo-

rency up and down the veranda, while Mrs. Black finished a letter to go in the mail.

The Van Arsdale ladies also were under the calm, but imperious sway of their fragile-looking niece. It was nothing unusual to see Miss Marcia and Miss Amanda each holding one of the fretful children, and making frantic endeavors to amuse their young relatives. The nurses were competent, but Mrs. Black so often had errands for them that their young charges were frequently in the care of other people.

Dorothy talked this matter over with Mrs. Faulkner, and as usual was wisely counseled by that lady. She advised, that in so far as Lilian and Fairy wished to play with the Black children, they should do so; but in no way were they under obligation to assist Mrs. Black in the care of her little ones. And, if she requested this at times when the girls had duties to perform, or indeed at a time when they wished to take their recreation, Mrs. Faulkner said they were perfectly justified in asking Mrs. Black to excuse them.

Dorothy told this to her sisters, who were

thereby much relieved; for though fond of the children, they did not, as Lilian said, wish to be pushing around those Black babies in perambulators from morning till night. But somehow the babies caused a great deal of commotion, and Dorothy began to understand why boarding-house keepers preferred grown people.

One day as the Dorrance girls sat on the veranda, Celestine came running to them, wringing her hands, after her French method of showing great dismay, and exclaiming:

"Mees Sylvie,—she have fallen into ze lake!"

"What!" exclaimed the three girls at once, jumping up, and running towards the lake; "where did she fall in? How did it happen?"

"Non, non,—not zat way! zis a-way," and Celestine started down a path that did not lead towards the lake. "I have pull her out; she is not drown,—but she is,—oh, so ver' soil,—so, vat you say,—muddy, oh, so much muddy!"

"Never mind the mud if the child isn't

drowned," cried Lilian; "but this is not the way to the lake. You said she fell in the lake."

"Not ze gran' lake, mees, but ze small lake, —ze ver' small, p'tit lake."

"Oh, she means nothing but a mud-puddle!" cried Fairy, who had run ahead of the rest, and found Sylvia lying on the grass, chuckling with laughter, while her pretty clothes were a mass of mud and wet.

"I falled in!" she cried, gleefully; "I falled in all myself, when C'lestine wasn't looking. Ain't I a funny dirl?"

"No, I don't think it's funny," began Dorothy, and then she paused, realizing that it was not her duty to reprimand Mrs. Black's children, and, too, Sylvia certainly did look funny. Not only her white dress, but her face and hands, and her dainty white slippers and stockings were bespattered with brown mud, and Lilian said that she looked like a chocolate éclair.

Another day, Celestine approached Dorothy with the pleasing news that, "Master Montmorency, he must have upsetted the blanc-mange."

Dorothy flew to verify this statement, and found that the son of the house of Black had indeed overturned a large dish of Bavarian cream, which Kathleen had made for that evening's dessert. It had been set out on the back porch to cool, and though protected by a wire screen cover, the enterprising youth had succeeded in wrecking the whole affair.

Dorothy's record for good-nature was seriously menaced by this mischievous prank, and she would probably have told Mrs. Black her honest opinion of the transgressing infant; but Kathleen's view of the case disarmed her.

"Whisht, now, darlint," said the big peacemaker, "niver you mind. I'll whishk up another bowl full in a minute, shure. The shpalpeen didn't mane anny harrum. Troth, he's nothin' but a baby. Wasn't ye wan yersilf wanst? Go 'long wid ye, now, and lave me to me wurruk."

This Dorothy was glad enough to do, and she walked away, feeling that Kathleen had taught her a lesson in making allowance for the unconsciousness of a child's wrongdoing.

When she reached the west veranda she

found the whole family and all the guests gathered there in a great state of excitement.

Following Lilian's pointing finger with her eyes, she saw Mary, the parrot, perched calmly on a high limb of an evergreen-tree.

"How did she get out?" cried Dorothy, aghast.

"Sylvia opened the cage door," answered Lilian, "when no one was looking,—and Mary just walked out. You should have seen her climbing that tree. She went up branch by branch."

The parrot looked triumphantly down at the crowd, and remarked, "Mary is high up; Mary is very high up."

"Come down, Mary," said Dorothy, beseechingly; "come down, Mary,—pretty Mary, —come down to Dorothy."

"Hurrah for Dorothy!" cried the parrot,— "hurrah for Sylvia! hurrah for the Dorrance Domain!"

This last cheer had been taught to Mary by Leicester, after many long and patient lessons, and never before had Mary spoken it so plainly and distinctly.

By this time the Van Arsdale ladies were in tears; Fairy, too, was weeping, for she felt sure Mary would fly away and never come back. The Black children required very little encouragement to start their lachrymal glands, and seeing the others' tears, immediately began to howl in various keys.

"Don't cry, don't cry!" said Mary, from her high perch.

"Come down, Mary," said Dorothy, coaxingly, and showing an apple and a cracker which she had procured; "come down and get your dinner."

But no urgings would induce the bird to come down. She cocked her eye wickedly, and hurrahed for everybody in turn, but utterly refused to descend.

"Ach, donnerblitzen!" exclaimed German Lisa. "Denn du bist ein dumkopf! Kommst du jetz hinein!"

"Ciel! what a bird it is!" wailed Celestine, wringing her hands; "ah, Marie, belle Marie, come down, cherie!"

But the French coaxing, and the German scolding had no more effect on Mary than the

weeping of the Van Arsdale ladies and the screaming of the children. She fluttered her wings, and seemed about to depart. Then she would look at them again, and with her exasperating winks, would hurrah enthusiastically.

"If she'll only stay there long enough, perhaps I can lasso her," said Leicester, running in the house for a string.

"No," said Mr. Faulkner, who followed him in, "I'm afraid that would frighten her; but if you had a butterfly net, with a very long handle, we might catch her with that."

"Just the thing," said Leicester; "and there is one in the storeroom; I remember seeing it there."

He brought it, but the handle was not long enough; so Mr. Faulkner proposed that they try placing a ladder against another tree near by, and then from the top of that, endeavor to reach the bird with a net.

Mary watched the proceedings with great interest. "Catch Mary!" she cried; "catch pretty Mary!"

"You bet we will!" cried Leicester, and

when the ladder was adjusted he climbed to the top of it, carrying the long-handled net with him.

They all thought the bird would be frightened at the net and fly away, or at least attempt to do so.

But she seemed to think it a game in which she played an important part, and she sat quietly on the branch, occasionally remarking, "Catch Mary, pretty Mary!"

With a sure aim, Leicester pushed the net towards the bird and brought it down over her head, then with a dextrous twist, he turned it upside down, with the bird in it, and lowered it carefully to Mr. Faulkner, who was standing below. At this unexpected indignity, Mary set up a ferocious squawking, the Black children redoubled their yells, and the Dorrance children cheered with delight.

Mary was taken from the net, unharmed, and restored to her happy mistress, who determined to send to town at once for a padlock for the cage door.

But though commotions such as these were of frequent, almost daily occurrence; yet

when they were not such as to interfere with the routine of her household management, Dorothy did not allow them to worry her.

Although usually busy all the morning, she found many spare hours for rest and recreation in the afternoon ; and the evenings were always delightful. The Black children were then safely in bed, and could make no trouble. The Dorrances were at liberty to be by themselves, or with their boarders, as they wished.

As Mr. Faulkner played the guitar, and Leicester could pick a little on the mandolin, and as they all could sing,—or fancied they could,—there were often very jolly concerts on the veranda, or, on moonlight evenings, out in the boat.

Mr. Black came up every week, and when he discovered the array of musical talent already there, he brought his banjo, and added greatly to the fun. Sometimes on rainy evenings, they would all congregate in the great empty ballroom, and play merry games. On such occasions, the Blacks and Faulkners seemed almost as young, and nearly as noisy as the Dorrances.

One day Leicester came to Dorothy, with a letter.

"Jack Harris has just written me," he said, "and he wants to come up here and board for a month; what do you think?"

"Let him come, by all means," said Dorothy, heartily; "he won't be a bit of extra trouble, and if he will pay our regular rates I shall be glad to have him. The Dorrance Domain is now a fully established summer hotel; and we are prepared to receive all who apply."

CHAPTER XXII

TWO BOYS AND A BOAT

IT was nearly a week after Leicester had written to Jack Harris, telling him that he might come up and board at the hotel, when, one afternoon, the Dorrance children heard queer sounds coming up from the direction of the dock.

All four ran to look over the rail of the upper landing, and saw a strange-looking craft anchored at the dock. On the dock were two boys and Mr. Hickox; the latter gentleman apparently much excited and interested.

"It's Jack Harris!" cried Leicester, "and another fellow with him; and, oh, I say, girls, they've got a motor-boat!"

"What's a motor-boat?" cried Fairy; but as all four were then flying down the steps at a rapid speed, nobody answered her.

Wondering who the second boy could be, and filled with delightful curiosity as to the

wonderful motor-boat, the Dorrances reached the dock with astonishing rapidity.

"Hi, Jack," cried Leicester, "thought you were coming up by train. What a dandy boat! Yours?"

"No," said Jack, whipping off his cap, and shaking hands with Dorothy; "it belongs to my chum here, Bob Irwin. I've brought him along, Dorothy, and I hope you can take us both in. Less said you had plenty of room. I would have written, but Bob only decided to come at the last minute, and we were so busy and excited getting the boat off, that I forgot to telegraph, though I meant to do so."

Bob Irwin was a big, jolly-looking boy, of about seventeen or eighteen, and his smile was so broad and comprehensive that the Dorrances felt acquainted at once.

"Indeed we have plenty of room," said Dorothy, answering young Irwin's greeting; "and we're very glad to have you both,—and your boat too," she added, still looking with a sort of fascination at the trim little affair.

"She is a jolly little craft," said Bob Irwin,

frankly; "I've only had her a few weeks. I named her *Shooting Star*, because she goes like one. We came all the way up from Jersey City by the canal."

"All the way!" exclaimed Lilian; "what fun you must have had coming through the locks!"

"Well yes,—but there were so many of them. The planes were worse, though; *Shooting Star* didn't take to those kindly at all. However, we're here; and if you'll keep us, we'll all have a good deal of fun on this lake."

"I didn't know you could come all the way by canal," said Leicester. "Are they willing to open the locks for you?"

"Oh, Bob's uncle is a Grand High Mogul or something in the canal company, and he gave us a permit. I tell you it was great fun; the boat goes like a greased arrow."

"Would you like to go for a little spin around the lake, now, all of you?" asked Bob.

"No,—not now," said Dorothy, looking at her watch. "We'd love to, but it is too near

dinner-time for us to go now. You know, as hotel proprietors, we have duties to attend to at scheduled hours; and we must be found at our posts."

Though said with apparent carelessness, this was really a brave bit of self-denial on Dorothy's part. For she was eager to try the pretty boat, and, too, there was nearly a half hour before her presence at the hotel was actually necessary.

But she had learned by experience that to go out on the lake was a proceeding which could not be accurately timed, and she knew that her duty pointed towards keeping on the safe side. Beside this, she must have another room put in readiness, for she had expected only Jack.

"But I *do* want to go out in the motor-boater," cried Fairy, dancing around the dock, and waving her arms. "Will you take us some other time, Mr. Bob?"

"Indeed I will," said Bob, heartily; "and anyway, it's just as well to take our traps up now, and get settled."

"Hickox is your man," said that long indi-

vidual, suddenly interrupting his own investigation of the marvelous boat. "Hickox'll cart your truck up the hill. Where might it be?"

"Here you are," and Bob sprang into the *Shooting Star* and tossed out three suit cases and a lot of odds and ends of luggage. "But we fellows can carry them up."

"No, sir, no, sir; Hickox'll look after things. It'll be all right."

Jack laughed at the familiar phrases, and Bob Irwin looked on with amusement while Mr. Hickox stowed the things in his queer-looking cart.

"And this is for you and your sisters, Miss Dorothy," said Bob, as he emerged with a final parcel.

There was no mistaking the contents of the neatly tied up box of candy; but it was of such a size that it nearly took the girls' breath away.

"Oh, thank you," cried Dorothy, dimpling with smiles. "I haven't had a speck of New York candy since I've been here. And the Woodville gum-drops are so highly colored

and so stiff inside, that they're not a bit of fun."

"They were made summer before last, too," said Leicester; "they ought to be sold as antiques."

"A whole big box of candy for our very own!" cried Fairy; "oh, that's better than the promoter-boat, or whatever you call it. And part of the candy is *my* very own, isn't it, Mr. Bob?"

"Yes, indeed; to do whatever you like with."

"Then I shall give half of my share to Mrs. Hickox. She'll be *so* surprised. I don't believe she ever saw any real choklits or butter-cuppers."

Leicester carried the precious box, and the six children climbed the steps to the Dorrance Domain. Naturally, Fairy reached the top first, and ran up the veranda steps, shouting, "Oh, grannymother! we've got two new boarders, and they came in an automobile-ship, and they brought a bushel of candy, real splendiferous New York candy,—and his name is Bob!"

Grandma Dorrance had always liked Leices-

ter's friend Jack, and she willingly extended her welcome to the pleasant-faced Bob.

The two boys were a decided addition to the gayety of the Dorrance Domain.

And the *Shooting Star* proved to be an equally desirable adjunct. Instead of rowing over to Dolan's Point each morning for the marketing, or harnessing old Dobbin and driving there, the swift little motor-boat did the errand in less than half the time, and was moreover a pleasure and delight.

Besides this there were merry excursions on the lake in the afternoons and evenings.

One day, when they had started out immediately after luncheon, and, owing to Mr. Black's expected arrival, were to have a late dinner, the six children made an exploring tour of the whole lake.

"I want to find out," said Bob, as they started off, "what feeds this lake. There must be several inlets and some of them large ones. A lake nine miles long has got to be fed by something."

"This lake is so tame it would eat out of your hand," said Leicester.

"Even so, *I* wouldn't want to feed it," said Dorothy; "my present array of table boarders is quite enough for me, thank you."

"There *is* an inlet," said Lilian, "just this side of Dolan's Point. The one that has the floating bridge across it, you know."

"But that isn't enough to make any impression on this big lake," insisted Bob; "there must be two or three arms somewhere, and if there are, we'll find them to-day; for I'm going all around the shores of the lake."

So the *Shooting Star* shot ahead, and skirted the margin of the lake for miles and miles.

But except the one at Dolan's Point, no inlet of any sort was discovered, and the round trip was completed by a crowd of mystified explorers.

"It's the queerest thing!" said Bob, whose scientific inquiries were prompted by a tenacious mind. "The water in Lake Ponetcong certainly must come from somewhere."

"I think it rains in," said Fairy, with a sage expression. "It hasn't rained much this summer, but it rained a lot when we were in

New York, and I s'pose the water just stayed in."

"I think it just was here from the beginning," said Lilian, "and somehow it never got away."

"That would do for some lakes," said Dorothy; "but here, they're always letting it out through the locks; and it does seem as if it would have to be filled up again, some way."

That evening the children put the puzzling question to Mr. Faulkner. He was a great favorite with the crowd of young people, and though a scientific man, he was capable of making explanations that were entirely comprehensible to their youthful minds.

They were all interested, though perhaps Bob Irwin was more especially so, in learning that Lake Ponetcong was fed entirely by springs in its bed.

This phrase pleased the Dorrance children very much, as their sense of humor was touched by what they chose to call the spring-bed of the lake.

But Bob was more seriously interested, and listened attentively to Mr. Faulkner's descrip-

tion of what was an unusual, though not unprecedented phenomenon.

Sometimes Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner accompanied them on their motor-boat trips; sometimes, too, Mr. and Mrs. Black went; but the Van Arsdale ladies refused to be persuaded to risk their lives in any such mysterious contrivance.

The Black children and their nurses were taken out once, but upon their return Bob Irwin declared himself unwilling ever again to carry such an emotional and cosmopolitan crowd. The baby shrieked and yelled in English, the French nurse and German nurse shrieked in their respective languages, and the way they all jumped about was really a serious menace to safety.

There seemed to be no end to the energies or the resources of the three boys in providing pleasure and entertainment.

Jack and Bob shared Leicester's duties as a matter of course; and though Leicester protested, the others insisted on helping him in whatever he had to do. They froze ice cream, they mowed the grass, they split kindling-

wood,—and they looked on these things as pastimes rather than tasks. They were big, strong, good-natured fellows, and firm friends and admirers of all the Dorrances.

Bob declared that although he drew the line at pushing the Black babies' perambulators, yet he was perfectly willing to act as Miss Mary's escort whenever desired.

One notable achievement of the boys', was a roof-garden. Jack had discovered the possibilities of the hotel roof during his earlier visit; and at his proposition it was arranged most attractively.

Small evergreen trees were brought from the woods and taken up to the roof where they were made to stand about in hedges or clusters. Rustic chairs, settees and tables were found in the storerooms, and rugs were placed about. Hammocks were swung, and over the top of all was rigged an awning, which could be rolled away if desired.

Chinese lanterns made the place gay by night, and flags and bunting formed part of the decoration.

Summer night concerts were often held here,

and when Tessie would appear with iced lemonade and cakes and fruit, everybody declared that never had there been a hotel so admirably managed as the Dorrance Domain.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN UNWELCOME PROPOSITION

THOUGH Dorothy enjoyed the fun of the motor-boat and the roof-garden, and was always happy whether working or playing, yet perhaps she liked best of all, to lie in her hammock of a summer afternoon, and read or day-dream as she looked across the lake and watched the shadows on the distant hills.

On these occasions she felt sure she could be a poet, if she only knew how to express properly the fancies that danced through her brain.

Sometimes she would provide herself with a pencil and paper, but though she might write a line or a phrase, she never could get any further. The attempt to put her thoughts into words always produced a crude and stilted result which she knew instinctively was not poetry.

"If I only could learn the wordy part of it," she said to herself, "I am sure I have the right thoughts to put into a poem."

As she lay thinking about all this, one warm afternoon, she suddenly heard a voice say: "*Is* this a hotel, or isn't it?"

Dorothy jumped, and sitting up in her hammock, saw a strange lady, who had apparently just walked into the Domain.

The newcomer was of the aggressive type. She was short and stout, with a determined-looking face and a rather unattractive personal appearance. She wore a short, thick brown walking-skirt, and a brown linen shirt-waist, and heavy common-sense shoes. A plain brown felt hat was tied securely to her head by means of a brown veil knotted under her chin. She carried in one hand a small suit-case, and in the other a stout walking-stick.

Pretty Dorothy, in her fluffy summer muslin, looked at the stranger curiously a moment, and then, quickly recovering her poise, said politely: "Yes, this is a hotel. Are you looking for board?"

"No, said the stranger, "I am on a tramp. In fact I *am* a tramp, a lady-tramp. I am spending the whole summer walking about the country, enjoying myself."

"You are fond of walking, then?" said Dorothy, by way of making conversation.

"No," I am not," replied the lady-tramp; "I am doing it to reduce my flesh, and I am enjoying myself because I have succeeded. Success is always enjoyable."

"Yes, it is;" and Dorothy herself, felt a satisfaction in the thought that she too was succeeding in her summer's work.

"My name," went on her visitor, "is Lucille Dillingham. I tramp all day, and at night I stay at any hotel or farmhouse near which I happen to find myself. And so I want to stay at this hotel to-night, and if you will tell me where to find the proprietor, I won't trouble you further."

"I am the proprietor," said Dorothy, smiling, for she felt quite sure this statement would surprise Miss Lucille Dillingham.

"If that's a joke," was the response, "I can't see any particular fun in it. But no

matter, I will inquire at the hotel myself."

"But truly, Miss Dillingham, I am the proprietor," and Dorothy stood up and put on the most dignified air of which she was capable. "I am Dorothy Dorrance, and this hotel is the property of my grandmother; but I am the acknowledged proprietor, and I shall be very glad to talk to you as such."

"You don't mean it, child! well if that is not the greatest I ever heard of! I am a great believer myself in the capability of women; but for a girl like you to run a hotel, is one ahead of *my* experience! Tell me all about it."

"There isn't much to tell," said Dorothy, who was not at all pleasantly impressed by the air and manner of the lady-tramp, and she couldn't help thinking to herself that the tramp was more in evidence than the lady. "However," she went on, courteously, "I live here with my grandmother, and my brother and two sisters. We have entire charge of this hotel, and we try to manage it

in a way to satisfy our guests and ourselves. If you wish to stay for the night, Miss Dillingham, I am sure we can make you comfortable."

Miss Dillingham's eyes sparkled.

"I will do better than that," she cried; "I will stay all the time, and I will run the hotel for you. I am a splendid manager, and much better fitted for that sort of thing than a frivolous young girl like you. Oh, we'll get along famously!"

Dorothy began to wonder whether Miss Dillingham might not have escaped from some lunatic asylum, but she only said, "Thank you very much for your kind offer, but the hotel is running smoothly, and I really can't see the necessity for any change in the administration." Just at this moment Fairy came flying across the lawn, and flinging herself into the hammock, drew the sides of it together around her athletic little body, and with a peculiar kicking motion twisted herself and the hammock over and over in a sort of revolving somersault. Then still holding the sides she poked up her golden head, crowned

with its big white bow, and gazed at the stranger.

"You must 'scuse me," she said, "for 'pearing so unsuspectedly. But I always come that way when I am in a hurry, and I'm always in a hurry."

"This is my sister Fairy, Miss Dillingham," said Dorothy, and Fairy bounced out of the hammock, and gracefully offered her hand to the stranger.

"How do you do?" she said. "I am very glad to see you, and I hope you have come to stay, 'cause it's time we had some new boarders. I am 'fraid we are running behind with our 'spenses."

Dorothy bit her lip to keep from laughing at Fairy's attitude of proprietorship, and Miss Dillingham stared at the child in blank amazement.

"Ah," she said, "is this another proprietor of this very remarkable hotel?"

"I'm not purporietor," said Fairy, "my sister is that; and my brother is clerk. I am just a general helper, and sometimes I help with the babies and the parrot."

Miss Dillingham seemed more and more bewildered, but she said, "I think you're all lunatics, and need somebody to look after you, and straighten you out. I shall stay here for the night, and look into this thing. It interests me extremely. Pray have you many boarders, and are they all as crazy as yourselves?"

Dorothy resented this question, but she kept her temper under control, and replied, "We have a number of boarders and we consider them quite sane, and they seem to think us so. If you wish to stay for the night, I will take you to the house at once and give you a room."

Miss Dillingham gave a sort of exasperated sniff, which Dorothy took to mean acquiescence, and they all started for the house.

Fairy walked backwards in front of the others, whirling all the way round, now and then, to make sure her path was clear.

"Did you really think we were crazy?" she asked, much interested in the idea.

"I did," replied Miss Dillingham, "and I am not yet convinced to the contrary."

Suddenly Fairy realized that this was another occasion for registration, and with one of her loudest shrieks at the thought, she darted towards the house and disappeared through the front door.

"Leicester!" she cried, and then with a prolonged yell, "Les—ter!" Liecester appeared by a jump through a window. "What's up?" he said.

"Oh, Less, there's a new boarder, and she's crazy, and she thinks we are, and she will want to register. Do get in the coop, quick!"

Grasping the situation, Leicester flung himself through the wicket door and behind the office desk. In a jiffy, he had assumed his clerkly air, and had opened the great register at the proper date.

When Dorothy appeared, a moment later, with Miss Dillingham, Leicester offered the pen to the newcomer with such a businesslike air that there seemed really no further room to doubt the responsibility of the hotel management. Then he rang a bell, and in a moment Mr. Hickox appeared, and with the

deferential demeanor of a porter picked up Miss Dillingham's suit-case and stick.

Then Dorothy escorted the lady-tramp to her room, and returned a few moments later, to find the other children waiting for an explanation.

"Where did you catch it?" asked Leicester.

"What is it?" inquired Lilian.

"It's only for one night," explained Dorothy, laughing; "but, Less, she wants to run the hotel! She thinks we aren't responsible!"

It really seemed inevitable, so Lilian started the Dorrance groan. The others took it up, with their usual enthusiasm, and though it was of late a forbidden indulgence, they let themselves go for once, and the result was an unearthly din that brought grandma to the scene at once.

"Children!" she exclaimed. "You know you promised not to do that!"

"I know, grandma," explained Fairy, "but truly, this is a specialty occasion. You don't know what's happened, and what she wants to do."

But before Mrs. Dorrance could learn what had happened, the newly-registered guest herself, came flying down the staircase.

"What *is* the matter?" she cried; "is the house on fire? Has anybody been killed?"

"We must 'pollergize, Miss Dillingham," spoke up Fairy; "that's our Dorrance groan, it belongs to the family; we don't use it much up here, 'cause it wakes up the baby and otherwise irritations the boarders."

"I should think it would," put in Miss Dillingham, with conviction.

"Yes, it does," went on Fairy, agreeably; "and so you see, we don't 'low ourselves to 'spress our feelings that way very often. But to-day we had a purtickular reason for it, and so somehow we found ourselves a-groaning before we knew it."

Ignoring Fairy and her voluble explanation, Miss Dillingham turned to Mrs. Dorrance, and inquired with dignity: "Are you the lady of the house?"

"I am the owner of the house," said Grandma Dorrance, with her own gentle dignity, "and my granddaughter Dorothy is in charge of it.

I must ask you to forgive the disturbance the children just made, and I think I can safely assure you it will not happen again."

Grandma Dorrance looked at her grandchildren, with an air of confidence that was responded to by a look of loving loyalty from each pair of laughing young eyes.

"I don't understand it at all," said Miss Dillingham; "but I will now return to my room, and take a short nap, if the house can be kept quiet. Then later, I have a proposition which I wish to lay before you, and which will doubtless prove advantageous to all concerned."

Miss Dillingham stalked majestically up the stairs again, and the Dorrances consulted as to what she could mean by her extraordinary proposition.

"I know," said Dorothy, "she wants to run the hotel. She informed me that she was much better qualified for such a business than I am."

"Oh, ho!" cried Leicester, "she is, is she! Well I like her nerve!"

"I wish she hadn't come," said Fairy, be-

ginning to cry. "I don't want her to run this hotel, and Dorothy and all of us only be just boarders."

"Don't cry, Fairy, whatever you do," exclaimed Leicester. "If you put up one of your best crying-spells, it will make more noise than the groan did, and our new friend will come racing down-stairs again."

This suggestion silenced Fairy, and Leicester went on: "Do you really mean, Dot, that she proposed seriously to take charge of the Domain?"

"Yes, she did; and I think she expects to make a business proposition to that effect."

"All right, then; let's give her as good as she sends. Let's pretend that we entertain her proposition, and see what she has to say for herself."

"You'd better be careful," said Lilian, the practical, "sometimes people get caught in their own trap; and if you pretend you're going to let her have charge of affairs here, first thing you know she'll be at the head of things, and we will all be nowhere."

"Huh!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I'm not

afraid of being dethroned by any lady-tramp that happens along. Just let her try it!"

"However she might frighten us singly," said Leicester, "I rather guess that the Dorrance family as a whole, can stand up for their rights."

"Don't be foolish, children," said grandma; "Dorothy must have misunderstood the lady. She couldn't have meant to make such a strange proposition at a moment's notice."

But apparently that is just what Miss Lucille Dillingham did mean. For that evening, after dinner, she gathered the Dorrance children round her in one of the small drawing-rooms, and talked to them in a straightforward if unacceptable way.

"Now don't say a word," she said, "until I have thoroughly explained my intention."

"We won't say a word, Miss Dillingham," said Fairy, "until you say your speech. But please say it plain, 'cause I'm the littlest one and sometimes I can't understand big words. 'Course I say big words myself, sometimes, but I understand my own, only other people's

aren't always tellergibble to me. And so, you see I just have to ——"

"That will do, Fairy," interrupted Leicester; "we've agreed not to do our talking until Miss Dillingham is through."

"In a few words, then," began Miss Dillingham, with the air of one who is satisfied of a foregone conclusion, "I want to say that in the few hours I have been here I have thoroughly acquainted myself with the conditions and possibilities of this hotel. And I have discovered that it is improperly managed by incompetent hands, and that it is, therefore, a lucky stroke of fortune for you that I happened along just now. I propose to assume entire charge of the hotel, give it a new name, establish new methods of management, and control absolutely the receipts and expenditures."

If the four Dorrances hadn't been possessed of a strong sense of humor, they would have been appalled by this extraordinary proposition. As it was, it struck them all as being very funny, and though with difficulty restraining a smile, Leicester inquired, with

every appearance of serious interest, "And where do we come in?"

"You will be merely boarders," announced Miss Dillingham, "and can run and play as befits children of your ages. It may seem strange to you at first, that I should make you this generous proposition on so short an acquaintance, but it is my habit to make quick decisions, and I rarely regret them."

"Would you mind telling us your reasons for wanting to do this thing?" asked Lilian.

"My reasons are perhaps too subtle for young minds to understand. They are partly ethical, for I cannot make it seem right that a girl of sixteen should be so weighted with responsibility; and, too, I am actuated in part by motives of personal advantage. I may say the project seems to possess a pecuniary interest for me ——"

"Miss Dillingham," said Fairy fixing her wide-open eyes on the lady's face, "'scuse me for interrupting, but truly I can't understand all those words. What does etherkle mean? and what is tercumerary? They are nice words and I would like to save them to use

myself, if I knew a little bit what they meant."

"Never mind what they mean, Fairy," said Leicester; "and Miss Dillingham, it is not necessary for us to consider this matter any further. You have made your proposition, and I am sure that I speak for the four of us, when I say that we decline it absolutely and without further discussion."

When Leicester chose, he could adopt a tone and manner that seemed far more like a man, than like a boy of his years; and Miss Dillingham suddenly realized that she was not dealing with quite such childish minds as she had supposed.

"My brother is quite right," said Dorothy, and she, too, put on her most grown-up manner, which, by the way, was very grown-up indeed. "Although surprised at what you have said, we understand clearly your offer, and we respectfully but very positively decline it *in toto*."

As Dorothy confessed afterwards, she didn't know exactly what *in toto* meant, but she felt quite certain it came in appropriately just there.

Miss Dillingham seemed to think so to, or at any rate she was impressed by the attitude of the Dorrance young people, and without a further word, she rose and stalked away and they saw her no more that night. The next morning she was up early and after a somewhat curt leave-taking, she tramped away.

"I think I could have liked her," said Dorothy, thoughtfully, "if she hadn't tried to steal away from us our Dorrance Domain."

CHAPTER XXIV

DOROTHY'S REWARD

FAIRY continued her weekly visits to Mrs. Hickox, but she was positively forbidden by her hostess ever to bring any one with her.

Mrs. Hickox was possessed of a peculiar kind of shyness, and she shrank from meeting people more sophisticated than herself. She had become devotedly attached to Fairy, and really looked forward eagerly to the afternoons the child spent with her. She continued to be surprised at the doings of the Dorrances, but had never been to the Domain since her first call upon the family.

"Mr. Hickox tells me you've got a roof-garden," she said to Fairy one day, as they sat sociably in the milk-room. "Now for the land's sake do tell me what that is. Is it the thing that runs by electrics?"

"No," said Fairy, who never laughed at

Mrs. Hickox's ignorance; "it's the *Shooting Star* that runs by electricity; the roof-garden doesn't run at all,—it just stays still."

"Well what is it, anyhow?"

"Why, the roof-garden is just a garden on the roof."

"A garden on a roof! well I *am* surprised! What do you raise in the garden? peas and beans? It must be an awful trouble to get the dirt up there, and to get the water up there to water things with. As for getting the potatoes and pumpkins down, I suppose you can just throw them down,—though I must say I should think it would spoil the pumpkins."

"Oh, we don't raise vegetables in the roof-garden, Mrs. Hickox," said Fairy, laughing in spite of herself.

"Well, what *do* you raise?"

"Why we don't raise anything; we just stay there."

"Humph! I can't see any garden about that. But I did want to know what the thing was like. 'Cause I cut out a clipping yesterday,—Hickory, he got his shoes home from the cobbler's, and they was wrapped in a

piece of a New York newspaper; my, but I had a good time! I cut so many clippings out of that newspaper, that what's left would do for a picture frame. The worst of it was, so many clippings backed up against others, and they wasn't the same length. People ought to be more careful how they print their newspapers. Well, as I was saying, I cut out a piece about a roof-garden, but I guess you're right about their not raisin' things in it. My land! I couldn't get head or tail to the whole yarn. So that's why I wanted to ask you just what a roof-garden is. But I ain't found out much."

Fairy endeavored to explain further, but Mrs. Hickox's mind seemed incapable of grasping the real intent of a roof-garden, after all; and so after intimating her continued surprise, she changed the subject.

Mrs. Hickox was the only one who could sustain the greater part in a conversation with Fairy. For some reason the child liked the queer old lady, and was contented to listen while she talked; though usually Fairy's own loquacity was not so easily curbed.

"I told Hickory, long ago, that that biggest sister of yours would set Lake Ponetcong on fire yet; or he told me, I don't know which, and it don't make no difference now; but, anyway, I'm free to confess she's done it. To think of a girl of sixteen takin' a pack of boarders into that big hotel, and makin' a success of it! It is surprisin'! and she does everything up so slick, too. Why, Hickory says the meals is always on time, and the whole place is always as neat and cleared-up lookin' as my best room."

"My sister Dorothy *is* a smart girl," agreed Fairy, who was always ready to stand up for her family; "Mr. Faulkner says she has great 'zecutive billerty,—and I guess she has."

"You all have," said Mrs. Hickox, heartily. "You're as queer as Dick's hatband,—every one of you,—but you're smarter 'n steel-traps. And the rest of you work just as good as Dorothy does. You ain't none of you shirks. Of course you have lots of help, but I s'pose you need it. Hickory, he does a lot of work for you, but, land! he gets paid enough, so it's all right."

"Wouldn't you like to come over and see the roof-garden?" asked Fairy, though without much hope that her invitation would be accepted.

"No, child, no; I ain't got no use for newfangled doin's. My old-fashioned garden is good enough for me. I like to read about things in newspapers, but I don't hanker none about being mixed up in 'em. Run along now, here comes Mr. Hickox and he'll be wantin' his supper. Run along, quick now,—good-bye. Well I *am* surprised!"

The last remark was addressed to the approaching Mr. Hickox, but having been so peremptorily dismissed, Fairy did not turn to see what the new occasion for Mrs. Hickox's surprise might be.

The month of August went pleasantly along at the Dorrance Domain. No new boarders were registered, but all who were there, stayed through the month, and all except the Blacks stayed into the early September. The Dorrances had given up all idea of Mr. Lloyd's coming to visit them, as he had written earlier in the season that he would do.

But one day a letter came, saying that he would run up for a couple of days.

Aside from their appreciation of Mr. Lloyd's kindness in a business way, the Dorrances all liked that genial gentleman as a friend, and the news of his visit was gladly received. The Dorrance Domain was put into gala dress for the occasion, and a special program was arranged for the evening's entertainment.

He was taken for a sail in the *Shooting Star*, given a drive behind old Dobbin, and initiated into the picturesque pleasures of the roof-garden.

Mr. Lloyd was most appreciative and enthusiastic; and it was fun for the Dorrances to see his astonishment at the success of their hotel management. Although Grandma Dorrance had written to him what the children were doing, in a general way, he had formed no idea of the magnitude of their enterprise.

The second day of his stay they held a family conference in one of the small parlors. He had told Grandma Dorrance that he wished for a business talk with her alone, but she had said that the children were quite as

capable of understanding their financial situation as she herself, if not more so; and that, after their interest and assistance through the summer, they were entitled to a hearing of whatever Mr. Lloyd might have to say.

So the family conclave was called, and Mr. Lloyd took the occasion to express his hearty appreciation of what they had done.

"You seem to have the Dorrance grit," he said; "your Grandfather Dorrance would have been proud of his grandchildren, could he have known what they would accomplish. He little thought when he bought this hotel property that his family would ever live here,—let alone running it as a hotel."

"It seems so strange," said Dorothy, "to think that this old Domain that we've made fun of for so many years, and never thought was good for anything, should have helped us through this summer."

"I hope, my dear," said Mr. Lloyd, "that you have been careful and prudent about your expenditures. For sometimes, these exciting enterprises look very fine and desirable, but are exceedingly costly in the end."

Mr. Lloyd was a kind friend, and felt great interest in the Dorrance fortunes; but his cautious, legal mind, could not avoid a careful consideration of the exact state of their finances.

"We have kept our accounts very strictly, sir," said Dorothy, "and we find that the Dorrance Domain has entirely supported our family for the summer,—I mean that we are in debt to nobody as a consequence of having spent our summer here."

"That is fine, my dear child, that is fine," said Mr. Lloyd, rubbing his hands together, as he always did when pleased; "I must congratulate you on that result."

"And we've had such fun, too," exclaimed Fairy, whose big white bow and smiling face suddenly appeared over the back of the sofa which she was clambering up. "I do some of the work, but I don't mind it a bit, and we all of us get plenty of time to play, and go sailing, and fishing and everything." As Fairy continued talking she kept rapidly scrambling over the sofa, down to the floor, under the sofa, and up its back, and over it

again, repeatedly. This in no way interfered with her flow of conversation, and she went on: "We can make all the racket we like, too,—nobody minds a speck,—not even Miss Marcia Van Arsdale. She says it's nothing but animal spiritualism."

"It has been one of the greatest comforts," said Grandma Dorrance, "to think that the children *could* make all the noise they wanted to; for I suffered tortures at Mrs. Cooper's, trying to keep them quiet. Here, they are free to do as they choose, and there is room enough to do as they choose, without annoying other people. I think myself, that they deserve great commendation for their work this summer. It has not been easy; but fortunately, they are blessed with temperaments that take troubles lightly, and make play out of hard work. But I want you to tell us, Mr. Lloyd, just how we stand financially. The children are anxious to know, and so am I. They insist that hereafter they shall share my anxieties and responsibilities, and I am more than glad to have them do so."

"I am gratified, Mrs. Dorrance, and my

dear young people, to be able to tell you,"—here Mr. Lloyd paused impressively,—"to be able to tell you that the outlook is highly satisfactory. Since you have not called upon me for any of your money during the summer months, I have been able to apply it towards the repairs that were so necessary on the Fifty-eighth Street house. Except for a few small bills, that indebtedness is thus provided for. Your next quarter's allowance is, therefore, unencumbered."

"I think," said Dorothy, her eyes shining in the excitement of the moment, "that this is a good time to present our statement of accounts. We've been keeping it as a little surprise for grandma, and we want Mr. Lloyd to know about it too. I wanted Leicester to tell you, and he said for me to tell you; but we all had just as much to do with it as each other, so we're all going to tell you together. Come on, all of you."

The other three Dorrances sprang towards Dorothy in their usual hop-skip-and-jump fashion, and in a moment they stood in a straight line, toeing a mark.

They took hold of hands, and swinging their arms back and forth, recited a speech which had evidently been rehearsed beforehand.

"We've paid all expenses," they said, speaking in concert, but not as loudly as usual, "and besides that, we've cleared three hundred dollars!"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Lloyd, holding up his hands in astonishment.

"Oh, my dear children!" cried Grandma Dorrance, uncertain whether she should laugh or weep.

"Yes, isn't it perfectly wonderful?" cried Dorothy, and the concerted speech being over, the four children precipitated themselves headlong in every direction.

"We wanted to holler it all out," explained Fairy; "but we were afraid the boarder-people would hear us, and they mightn't think it polite."

"It's all right," said Lilian, stoutly; "we didn't overcharge anybody, and we didn't scrimp them. The reason we made money was because we did so much of the work our-

selves, and because Dorothy is such a good manager."

"Hurrah for Dorothy," shrieked Leicester, in a perfect imitation of Miss Marcia's parrot.

The cheer that went up for Dorothy was deafening, but nobody minded, for everybody was so happy.

"I couldn't have done anything without the others' help," protested Dorothy; "and of course we couldn't any of us have carried out this plan at all, without grandma. So you see it took the whole five of us to make a success of the Dorrance Domain."

"Hurrah for the Dorrance Domain," shouted Fairy, and then every one in the room, not excepting Grandma Dorrance and Mr. Lloyd, cheered from their very hearts,

"Hurrah for the Dorrance Domain!"

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